FREE!

MMOZine

Issue 15 | September 2009

ULTIMA ONLINE
12 YEARS ON!

Free Magazine For MMO Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates

REVEALED

ALLODS ONLINE

Battle beyond the stars in this fantasy space saga

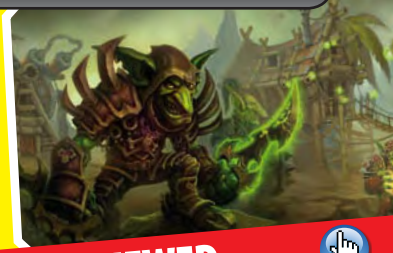
MASSIVE REVIEW

AION

BONUS MAGAZINE

THE MMO RELEASE OF THE YEAR TAKES FLIGHT

PLUS AGE OF CONAN: RISE OF THE GODSLAYER + MYTHEON + JUMPGATE EVOLUTION



+ PREVIEWED

World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

Azeroth will never be the same again!

+ PLAYTESTED

Star Wars: The Old Republic

We explore a more civilised age

+ REVIEWED

CrimeCraft

A world of warfare, gangland style!

Welcome to MMOZine

Aion is here at last, and after the disappointment of Champions Online, we're happy to say that it's close to being the game we hoped for. Pre-order sales confirm it as the biggest MMO release of 2009, pleasing NCsoft so much that they announced the closure of Dungeon Runners the same day.

What is it with NCsoft and the closing down of MMOs? Regardless of whether or not the closures of Auto Assault, Tabula Rasa and Dungeon Runners were justified, the upshot is that it doesn't foster much confidence if players can't be sure if a new game will be around a year later.

Aion's future seems fairly secure, but it will be interesting to see whether it's still flying high a year from now. The MMOrtality rate is worryingly high these days.

Richie Shoemaker, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

The MMOZine massive were told to go forth and multiplay, which they did…

STEVE HILL
Spaced out from Star Wars and Jumpgate.

PAUL PRESLEY
Still alive after EVE Fanfest in Iceland.

LESLEY SMITH
Flying high after months of Aion.

DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights…

AION
The verdict is in…

Allods
Russia's finest MMO?

Alganon
Revealed inside

JUMPGATE EVOLUTION
Stars in their eyes

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

Mytheon
Age of Conan: Rise of the Godslayer
EVE Online: Domination
Dungeon Runners
Gates of Andoran
Star Wars: Clone Wars
Runes of Magic
Pirates of the Burning Sea
World of Warcraft: Cataclysm
Jumpgate Evolution
Alganon
Star Wars: The Old Republic
Allods Online
Aion
CrimeCraft
Ultima Online

DON'T MISS ISSUE 16 SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE!

WARNING! MULTIMEDIA DISABLED!

If you are reading this, then you didn't choose "Play" when Adobe Reader asked you about multimedia when you opened the magazine.

Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

Mytheon

FIRST LOOK

Jason and the Argonauts... with Stones

Publisher: True Games
Developer: Petroglyph
Heritage: Star Wars: Empire at War
Link: www.mytheon.goa.com
ETA: 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Mytheon

Earth, wind and fire.

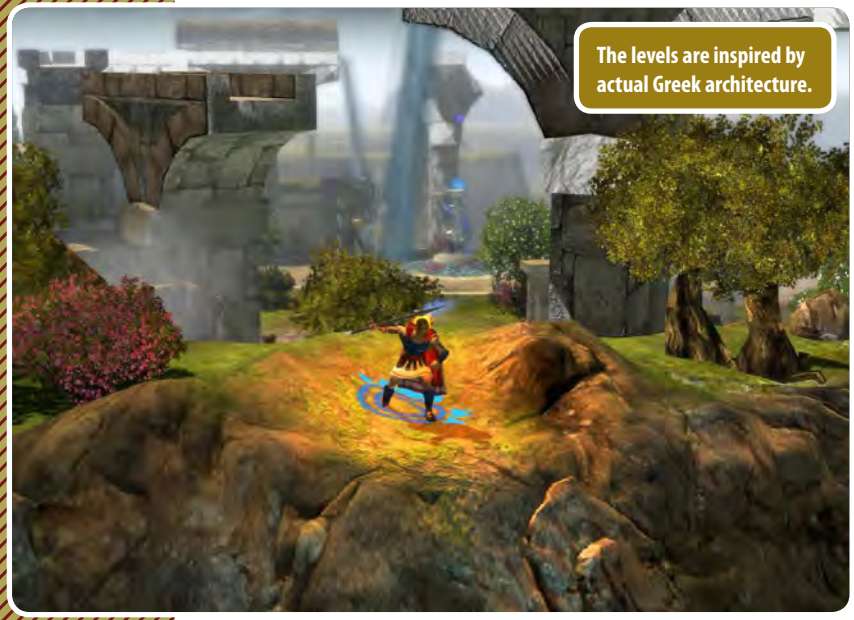
What's the story?

Based in Las Vegas, developer Petroglyph was formed from the embers of Westwood Studios, the outfit originally responsible for the small matter of the Command & Conquer series. As such, Mytheon will feature elements of real-time strategy, all wrapped up with a bit of action in a vaguely historical, graphically lush setting. That setting is ancient Greece, and Mytheon will fully embrace the much-explored mythology of the period. Based around the main hub of Argos, a renowned centre of trade, it's an actual city in Greek mythology, as opposed to a cheap high-street retailer.

What do we know?

As is becoming increasingly fashionable, Mytheon will be free-to-play, with Real Money Transactions available for vanity items and inevitably other more useful fare. The game will launch with 30 huge regions, five of which will be dedicated to PvP. Three classes will be available, the Warcaster (Tank), Elementalist (Mage), and the Eidolon (Healer), who actually comes from Egypt. Taking place against a day/night cycle, some features will only only accessible at specific times. The gameplay essentially revolves around ancient relics known as the Stones, of which there are around 150 types, offering a rock-scissors-stone style of combat, for instance. Although your character only has 30 levels, your collection of Stones will progress through the levels with you.

"Mytheon will feature real-time strategy wrapped up in a lush historical setting"



The levels are inspired by actual Greek architecture.

You're going to need some big stones.

When do we get more?

A refreshing change from goblin bashing, the familiarity of the setting and the relevance of the content could make Mytheon the Jason and the Argonauts of the MMO world.

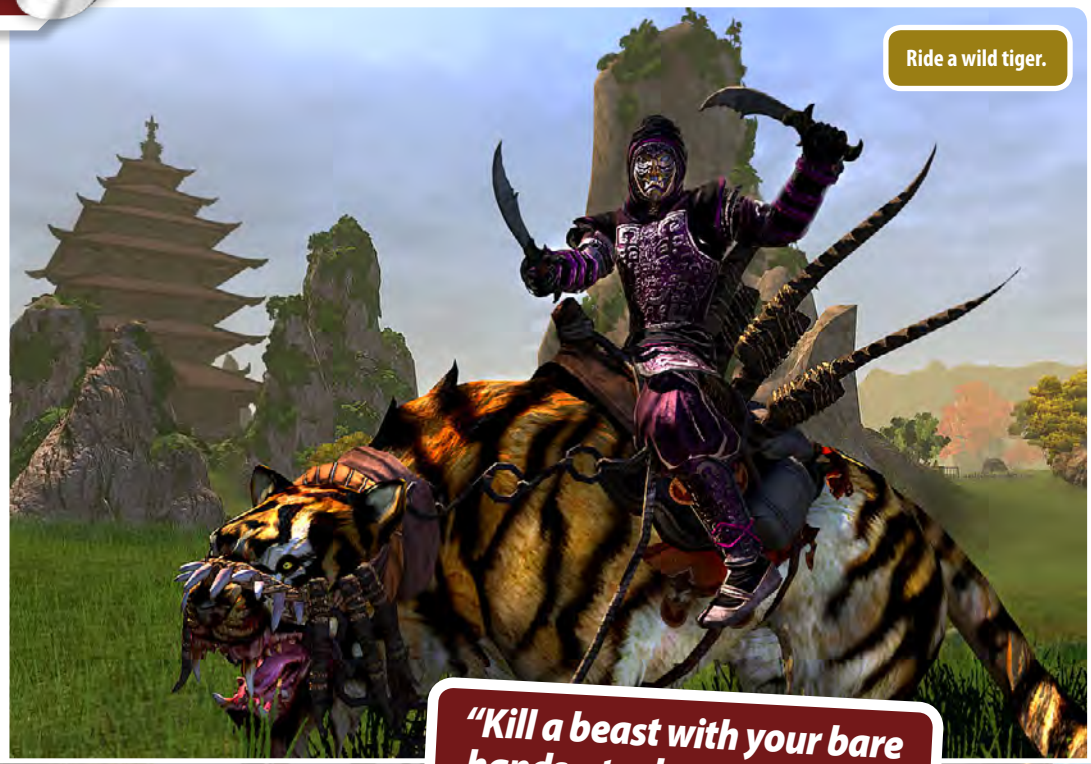
AION
PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED
A WORLD DIVIDED. A JOURNEY UNCHARTED.
WWW.AIONONLINE.COM
12+
www.pegi.info
12
usk
© 2009 NCsoft Europe Ltd. All rights reserved. NCsoft, the interlocking NC logo, Aion and all associated logos and designs are trademarks or registered trademarks of NCsoft Corporation. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.
AION
NCSOFT

Age of Conan: Rise of the Godslayer

Welcome to the realm of the barbarian…

Publisher: FunCom
Developer: FunCom
Heritage: Age Of Conan: Hyborian Adventures, Anarchy Online
Link: www.riseofthegodslayer.com
ETA: 2009

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Age of Conan: Rise of the Godslayer


Ride a wild tiger.

What's the story?

Having finally ironed out the well-publicised problems with Age Of Conan, the inaugural expansion pack was fully playable at the recent GamesCom show in Germany. Again drawing tenuously from the works of Conan author Robert E Howard, the action is set in the 'strange and mystical land' of Khitai – essentially East Asia. Its visual style eschews the hackneyed Japanese culture in favour of Korea and China, including the Great Wall among its iconic landmarks. Effigies of Conan dot the landscape, after he slew an elephant god here 25 years ago.

What do we know?

With no level cap raise and no new classes, the expansion will launch with five seamless playfields, each home to two warring factions to ally with, all with a distinctive visual appearance that you will eventually share. Two new mounts will be available, a wolf and a tiger. However, to get one you'll have to go into the wild unarmed, kill a beast with your bare hands, steal one of its cubs and teach it to hunt. Then craft a saddle. Nobody said it was going to be easy.

"Kill a beast with your bare hands, steal one of its cubs and teach it to hunt – no-one said it would be easy"

It's not Kew Gardens.

When Tortoises Attack!

When do we get more?

Hopefully with lessons learned from the original game, new content awaits level 20-40 players when it's ready. No release date has been confirmed, so we expect it to be in good shape from the kick-off. Or there will be trouble.

"THE BENCHMARK FOR ACTION GAMES
HAS JUST BEEN RAISED"

– CVG.com

CALL OF DUTY MODERN WARFARE 2

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

18 | PS3 PlayStation 3 | PlayStation Network | XBOX 360 | XBOX LIVE | NINTENDO DS | PC DVD ROM | ACTIVISION activision.com | infinity ward

CONTROL Close Issue Print Page Search Issue Zoom In Zoom Out Toggle Full Screen Previous Page Next Page

7 UP

New MMOs and content updates to mark on your calendar with a BIG RED PEN!

Earth Eternal

Developer: Sparkplay Media | **ETA:** 2009

If you like the idea of a quality browser-based MMOG without the toon antics of Free Realms, Earth Eternal could be the game you've always dreamed about. It is set in a future where humans have given way to animal hybrids (Caprican, Feline, Yeti, Noctari, plus 18 playable others) and will be free to play.

Runes of Magic

Developer: Runewalker | **ETA:** Out now

With the Elven Prophecy expansion recently released, Frogster have been quick to follow it up with a new area called the Autolia Volcana. Offering such enticing locales as Dead Tree Plains and the Steel Bridge of Cremations, it's not a place for a first date, nor for those low of level now that Runes has had its level cap raised.

EVE Online: Dominion

Developer: CCP Games | **ETA:** November

Having banned almost 10,000 players, CCP are hoping to get EVE back on track with Dominion. The winter add-on will see planets looking sharper and changes to capital ships and the maligned 'sovereignty' system. CCP have also announced a multiplayer console shooter called Dust 514, in which EVE Online players can influence the grunts fighting planetside.

Pirates of the Burning Sea: Power & Prestige

Developer: Flying Lab | **ETA:** Spring 2010

Capturing ports for king and country is all well and good, but the next expansion for Flying Lab's yarr 'em up will build on the game's impressive strategic foundations by allowing players to govern ports. How, you ask? By setting taxes, erecting defences to keep out enemy hulls and expanding a port's influence so that it becomes a centre of trade (piracy) and commerce (wenchery).

Dungeon Runners

Developer: NCSoft

The Grim Reaper has been handed another MMOG contract by NCsoft, with news that Dungeon Runners will be joining Auto Assault and Tabula Rasa on the servers in the sky. The reason, from Lead Programmer Stephen Nichols, is that 'the game just isn't profitable'. It's final hours will be New Year's Eve, so make other arrangements if you were planning on a night running dungeons.

Star Wars: Clone Wars

Developer: SOE

It appears that another Star Wars MMOG is in development, one apparently based in the Clone Wars timeline and using the Free Realms codebase. Given Sony's experience with Star Wars Galaxies, they would seem to have the pedigree, but many fans won't need reminding about the dark days of the NGE or the more recent Clone Wars CGI movie. Be wary, we must.

Gates of Andoran

Developer: Gameforge | **ETA:** Winter 2009

Out now is this fantasy-themed MMOG featuring the conflict between two warrior castes. What sets it apart are 'strategic battles between player groups using a real-time strategic command system'. We'll see if it can take on the freeplayers next issue.

ON THE RADAR

2010
- APB

DECEMBER
- Everquest: Underfoot

NOVEMBER
- Lord of the Rings Online: Siege of Mirkwood

OCTOBER
- EVE Online: Domination

CBT REGISTRATION OPEN NOW AT ALLODS.GPOTATO.EU

SUBSCRIPTIONLESS*
Register to play subscriptionless for life at
ALLODS.GPOTATO.EU

ALLODS ONLINE

VIDEO 1 VIDEO 2 VIDEO 3

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

ATTACK, DEFEND, LOOT OR PLUNDER! SET SAIL INTO THE ASTRAL WITH ALLODS ONLINE

"Allods Online has the potential to offer something really exciting in a genre that struggles to innovate"
(Videogamer.com, August 2009)

* Yep, you read that right. No subscriptions, ever!
Free to play MMORPG with player controlled space battleship in a fantasy space opera universe.
Allods Online features 2 factions, 28 classes, 1500 quests, PvP, PvE, raid, instance, boss monster, pets, guild, craft.
Copyright © ASTRUM NIVAL, LLC. All rights reserved. Published by © GALA NETWORKS EUROPE LTD.

gPotato ASTRUM NIVAL PC ONLINE

World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Heritage: Diablo II, StarCraft, World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King
Link: www.wow-europe.com
ETA: 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

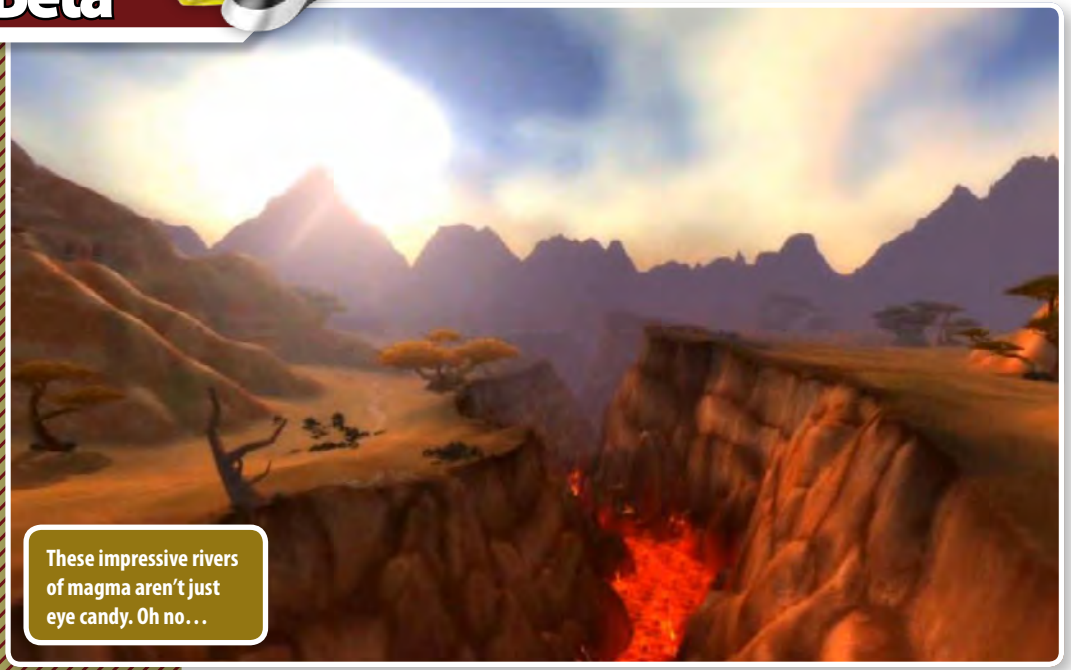
Shell-shocked doesn't begin to describe the news that Horde will be able to play Goblins.

Blizzard takes WoW back to its roots

Change is coming to Azeroth with the announcement of the third World of Warcraft expansion: Cataclysm. Announced at BlizzCon, this latest expansion will not only totally transform Azeroth, it will also see the return to Warcraft lore of the insane Dragon Aspect Deathwing, as well as the introduction of two new playable races: the Worgen and the Goblins.

Rather than introduce a new continent or travel to another far-off world, Cataclysm returns to WoW's roots by fleshing out the old world. It will introduce the sealed-off land of Gilneas and the Lost Isles which will serve as the starter areas for the Worgen and the Goblins respectively. Indeed Blizzard seems to have paid close attention to the comments of fans by raising the level cap to 85 rather than 90 and revamping Azeroth so that flying mounts can be used in Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms.

Gilneas feels as if it was pulled straight out of Eastern Europe, complete with a creepy medieval vibe.



These impressive rivers of magma aren't just eye candy. Oh no…

Goblins have awesome racials which might make people look beyond their green exteriors.

WoW: Cataclysm cont.

New zones, old land

Slated for a release sometime in 2010, the expansion will introduce another five new zones on top of Gilneas and the Lost Isles. These include the Twilight Highlands (formally known as the dragon-held fortress of Grim Batol), the Elemental Planes including Deepholm, the sunken city of Vashj'ir, Mount Hyjal and the Titan stronghold of Uldum. Indeed Blizzard is really pushing the boundaries of this beloved MMO with the inclusion of the first underwater zone as well as revealing that Kalimdor does not stop at the gates of Uldum in the south of Taranis.

Lore and order

The lore featured in the comics, manga and novels is also being tied together and woven into the game, giving fans of the overarching franchise a glimpse of what is to come. But it also explains the reason why new class and race combinations have been introduced, giving these revolutionary changes a source in canon. From purely a lore perspective, though, Cataclysm also promises the return of Malfurion Stormrage, the fire Elemental Ragnaros, as well as Deathwing and his minions, the Twilight Hammer clan.

At the same time, Blizzard is keen to restore the importance of 'war' in World of Warcraft, once more pitting the Horde and the Alliance against each other, as well as changing the territorial boundaries. Known for their bias, they are giving the Horde a much bigger presence in the predominately Night Elf lands of Ashenvale and Darkshore, as well as taking over Southshore. There is no word yet on whether the Alliance races will be compensated in turn.

The heart of Cataclysm is, as the name suggests, change. This is not just a change in land and lore though, it is much deeper than that. The trailer shows towns like

WoW: Cataclysm cont.

Auberdine destroyed and natural disasters ravaging the once familiar lands. Indeed Deathwing's eruption back into the lands of Azeroth has fundamentally changed them, causing giant cracks filled with lava to split entire zones in two.

Yet it is not all about destruction. Graphically, Deathwing's return has allowed Blizzard to revamp old and, some might say, stale areas. However, some zones, such as the much-reviled land of Desolace and the dense zone of Feralas, for example, will bloom with new life. Equally the druidic magics of Naralax, found ever-sleeping in Wailing Caverns, will finally have an affect and cause the surrounding land to be revived. Blizzard will also give us a glimpse of new, and more realistic, water effects.

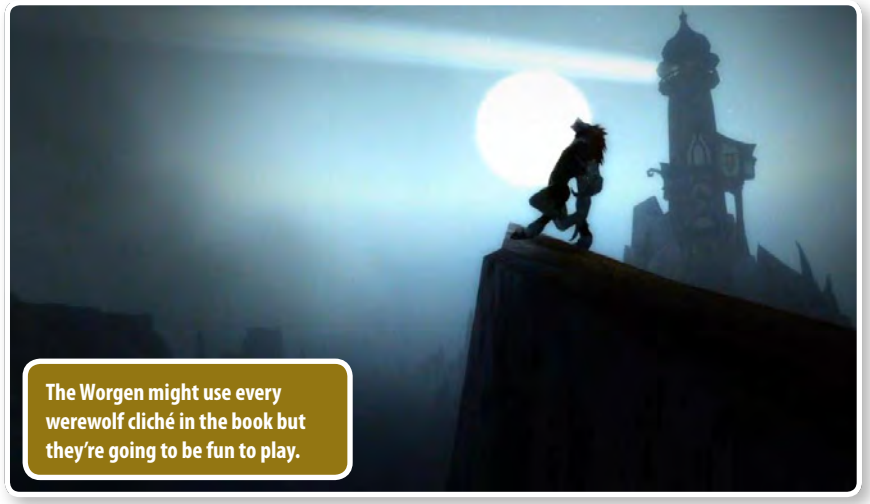
New cityscapes

Yes this is all motivated as a way of allowing flying mounts but the lore perspective doesn't make it seem that way. At the same time, given the sheer amount of changes that will take place, Blizzard is also tarting up the capital cities. Undercity will now appear as it always should have – the ruins of Capital City, the hub of Lordaeron's civilisation. Stormwind, meanwhile, will be getting a new quarter themed after Gilneas, a home from home for the Worgen heroes of the Alliance.

"Blizzard is keen to restore the importance of 'war' in World of Warcraft"

It's still early days, especially given that we've not even killed Arthas yet, but Cataclysm is full of promise. Blizzard developer panels have hinted that there'll be simplified stats and another legendary weapon. Classic players will be pleased to see more dungeons being revamped as higher level heroics, beginning with Shadowfang Keep and Deadmines, as well as a new secondary profession and the ability to level guilds. Indeed, we're sure every World of Warcraft player is already counting down the days until the Cataclysm changes Azeroth forever. In a good way, we hope.

Time to play 'Spot the Druid'.



The Worgen might use every werewolf cliché in the book but they're going to be fun to play.

MMOZine Verdict

Filled with promise, welcome to Warcraft 2.0 – Azeroth will never be the same again

HOW COMPLETE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

WHAT HERO WILL YOU BE?

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

TOTAL CHARACTER CREATION AND CUSTOMIZATION. DESIGN YOUR ULTIMATE CHAMPION. THOUSANDS OF OPTIONS, INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.

CREATE YOUR NEMESIS! YOUR ARCH-ENEMY WILL GROW IN POWER TO CHALLENGE YOUR CHAMPION AND UNLEASH MAYHEM ON THE WORLD.

REGISTER FOR THE BETA NOW AT CHAMPIONS-ONLINE.COM

CHAMPIONS ONLINE

PC DVD-ROM SOFTWARE

12 www.pegi.info pegionline.eu

HERO GAMES

CRYPTIC

COMING SEPTEMBER 2009

©2009 CRYPTIC STUDIOS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. CRYPTIC STUDIOS, THE CRYPTIC STUDIOS LOGO, CHAMPIONS ONLINE AND THE CHAMPIONS ONLINE LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF CRYPTIC STUDIOS, INC. ATARI AND THE ATARI LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OWNED BY ATARI INTERACTIVE, INC. THE ESRB RATING ICONS ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

ATARI

JUMPGATE EVOLUTION

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: NetDevil
Heritage: Warmonger
Link: www.jumpgate evolution.com
ETA: TBA

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Jumpgate: Evolution

Jumpgate: Evolution

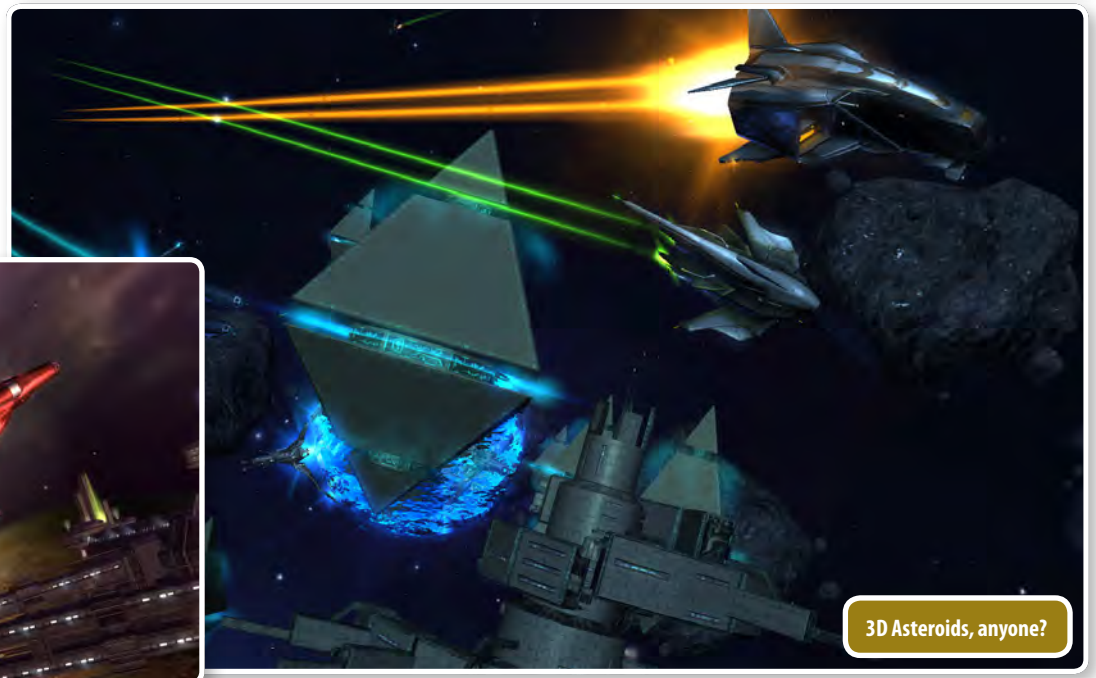
In space, no one can hear you grind…

An exclusive view from within the Jumpgate defence grid.

We first clapped eyes on space-based Jumpgate: Evolution a few months ago, coming away from the Codemasters office somewhat underwhelmed (or at least the EVE Online-obsessed editor did). This time round, on a laptop in Germany, it's a slightly different beast, with a number of tweaks making for a more accessible proposition.

As the splendidly named producer Hermann Peterscheck explains: "What we've basically been working on is really trying to improve the immersion value of the game, and then lots of little areas of polish. The beginning of the game is now in space so you're flying through and it's much more visually compelling; before we had this cheap login screen. There are games that do it very well, like Left 4 Dead or Halo, where you feel like you're in the game from the very start."

To bring you up to speed,


3D Asteroids, anyone?

The developers may have seen the film Alien.

Some Octavian gunboats let the Solrain have it.

Jumpgate continued

Jumpgate: Evolution sees you play one of three nations, competing and co-operating for control over space. Lifting from such space classics as Elite, X-wing Vs Tie-fighter and Privateer, twitch-based combat offers a refreshing change to the often moribund point-and-click fare of most MMOs. So instead of quests involving clobbering rats with a stick, missions in Jumpgate are more likely to require you to shoot down a set number of enemy craft in an action-packed dogfight.

However, as Hermann explains, "Another area that we focused on is the missions in general. It felt like you were an intergalactic messenger boy, which isn't very cool. People weren't very engaged with them and just like every other MMO we had this problem that no one reads anything. Now agents give you missions so we changed the interface a little bit, but the important piece is now when you take a mission, they update in space. It feels like a push as opposed to a pull. It's much more like an FPS like BioShock where you get to some point and then – boom! – the guy pops up and he tells you what to do next. Rather than the mission being 'go kill eight bears', it's like 'go over there and check what's going on', and then on your way you might get jumped."

The latest build also has a much more direct tutorial, with pop-up hints appearing as you play. It's a transparent attempt to make the game more palatable to casual players, as Hermann readily admits.

"Space games have this hardcore reputation and we're trying to break out of that," he says. "We want to build a game that as many people can play as possible. I want everybody that sits down and wants to try it to be able to play."

When we played it, shooting enemy ships seemed to be little more than a case of aiming the reticle on a distant icon and clicking

SPACEMEN 3

Who will win the space race?

OCTAVIAN **QUANTAR** **SOLRAIN**

Devoted to the art of war and armed to the gills, the bloodthirsty Octavians intend to dominate space through superior firepower.

JUMPGATE EVOLUTION

Jumpgate continued

endlessly, with little real sense of engagement. That reticle has now been made sticky, creating a more level playing field, with less disparity between good players and cack-handed buffoons. And thankfully, you are now afforded a decent view of the enemy ships, replete with swirling explosions when you do manage to shoot them down.

As Hermann explains, "We slowed down the ships quite a bit, which brought the combat a lot closer. If you were fighting things far away you never really saw any ships on the screen so we brought that in a lot closer and added death events to give the enemies more personality."

As for those ships, they seem to have a more organic, almost Giger-esque feel to them.

"With regard to influences, we really look at as much different fiction as we can," says Hermann. "We try to look at what makes those core archetypes work, borrowing from Alien, Star Wars, the new Star Trek movie – the whole team went to watch that and came back with all these new ideas."

Jumpgate: Evolution is certainly looking better than a few months ago, and in a further stab at ubiquity it should run on pretty much any PC, including laptops. Whether it will lure anyone away from the long haul of EVE online is a different question, albeit not necessarily a relevant one.

"The ships in Jumpgate have a more organic, Gigeresque feel to them"

"The EVE online players are probably predisposed to wanting to play a space game," claims Hermann. "But our game is much more about flying around and completing missions and building your ship up and collecting a bunch of ships. I feel like their game is much more about Empire building. I'm hoping it's more complementary as opposed to directly competitive. I'm hoping we can produce something that's less demanding on your time, so you can jump in, do some missions and leave again. That doesn't mean you can't play it for 12 hours if you want to…" Remember: take regular breaks.

The Solrain give chase to the Quantar in the Stanarrian Traverse. Obviously.

Strong, saturated colours give the game a gawp factor.

MMOZine Verdict

Niche, but a refreshing change from the usual MMO fare

HOW COMPLETE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

LINEAGE II
THE CHAOTIC THRONE
Experience a world like no other!
Final GRACIA
THE 2ND THRONE
Prepare yourself for the largest Lineage® II expansion to date, Gracia Final. Transform the way you play and enjoy the freedom of flight as you explore the brand new continent of Gracia!
Start your adventure today
LINEAGE II
THE CHAOTIC THRONE
ENHANCED
FULL SCREEN
AVAILABLE NOW!
Includes 30 DAYS GAME TIME
WWW.LINEAGE2.COM
Over 19 million gamers worldwide
© 2004 - 2008 NCsoft Europe Ltd. All rights reserved. NCsoft, the interlocking NC logo, Lineage, The Chaotic Chronicle, The Chaotic Throne, Gracia and all associated logos and designs are trademarks or registered trademarks of NCsoft Corporation. All other trademarks or registered trademarks are property of their respective owners.
NCSOFT
LINEAGE II TEAM

CONTROL Close Issue Print Page Search Issue Zoom In Zoom Out Toggle Full Screen Previous Page Next Page

Alganon

Publisher: Quest Online
Developer: Quest Online
Heritage: Empire of Istaria, Horizons
Link: www.alganon.com
ETA: 31st October

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Alganon

Taking social networking to a whole new level

Alganon is a funny kind of MMO in that it cannot be easily classified. On one hand it seems to fall very much into the casual gaming corner while on the other it is a traditional fantasy RPG. But there's an added twist. Alganon has its sights set on being an MMO for the 21st century and incorporates two of the biggest internet innovations in the form of social networking site MyAlganon and the Great Library, its own Wiki-like encyclopedia.

Set in the lands of Ardonya and Harraja, Alganon promises feuding factions, numerous classes and a massive in-game world. Typical swords and sorcery stuff, but the upside to this is a huge amount of background lore from history to a pantheon of deities that does more than whet your appetite. The website offers a vast amount of info but you get the impression this is just the tip of a very large iceberg which will be revealed when the game goes live this Halloween.

For a starter area, there are quite a few high-level NPCs.

Despite the cute noises they make, Sproglings are dangerous little buggers.

GOING BEYOND THE GAME

Joining in with the social scene

The main social hub is the MyAlganon subsite (www.myalganon.com) which allows players to upload their own photos or avatars – you can join groups, interact with others and host guild sites. Essentially it's going to be a one-stop shop for all things associated with the game and a way of continuing in-game interaction in the real world.

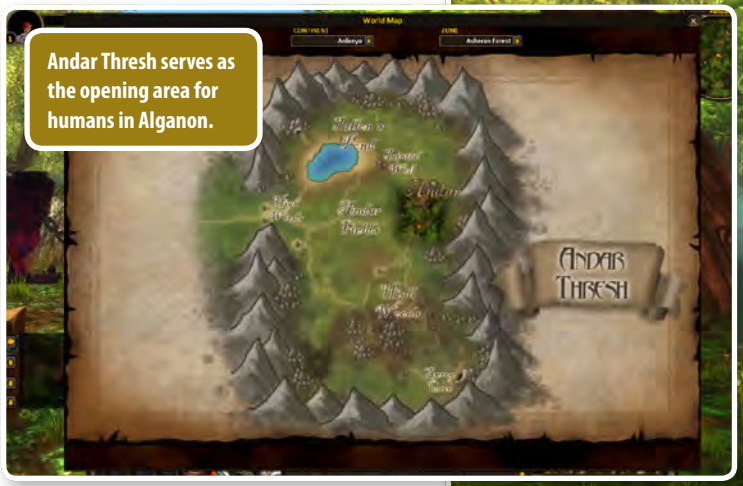
The other aspect, the Great Library, serves not just as a Wiki-like database of everything Alganon, it also records the deeds of players within the game. Each major city will have its own Library but players can access the data it contains anywhere in-game. It promises to be the very backbone of the game, into both the world and the people who populate it.

Alganon continued

As with any MMO, the world in which Alganon is set is torn by war and strife. You get to pick to be either a member of the Asharr or the Kujix, each with a selection of races including human, Sylvain, Vesperling and Talrok. The usual fantasy class archetypes are also very at home, with seven classes to choose from including Magus, Healer, Prophet, Warden, Soldier, Ranger and Assassin. However, while choices might seem limited at the moment, the developers promise this is only the start of an epic game. Indeed Alganon seems to break the mould in more ways than one when it comes to your typical MMO.

For example, the game doesn't just offer guilds, it also offers the over-arching concept of family. These are clan-like organisations specific to each race which allow you to play with people in a similar mindset to your own. So those who like making money through professions would join the Crafter family while others who love nothing more than wandering and exploring would join their race's Explorer family. MMOs are known for attracting every kind of player but this kind of detail will serve to break down the notion that fantasy MMOs are only for endgame players with plenty of time to kill. The message is clear: Alganon welcomes everyone.

While we got a sneak peak at the closed beta as this issue went to press, it's hard not be impressed about everything Alganon has to offer, from the artwork and music to the mechanics of the social networking. The lore is rich, the world epic and beautifully crafted. There is plenty of choice when it comes to races and classes and yet, fundamentally, Alganon takes the best bits of a much-played genre and combines them within a unique framework relevant to the modern MMO player who doesn't want the game to end when you log out. Rather than trying to be the next Aion or World of Warcraft, it is attempting to carve out its own niche in a highly competitive genre.



Andar Thresh serves as the opening area for humans in Alganon.

The landscape is lush and fantastical, with the odd crystal thrown in.

"Alganon breaks the mould in more ways than one when it comes to your typical MMO"

MMOZine Verdict

Socially aware and determined to be different, Alganon has something for everyone

HOW COMPLETE

95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

75%

Star Wars: The Old Republic

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: BioWare
Heritage: Mass Effect, KOTOR
Link: www.swtor.com
ETA: 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Star Wars: The Old Republic

We get our hands on a lightsaber or two

We last saw Star Wars: The Old Republic behind closed doors in Los Angeles. This time round, it's a public showing at the GamesCom show in Cologne, where we are given notional VIP treatment in a room full of German fans, on a very hot day. The location might be different, but much of the presentation is identical, right down to the ad-libs. As such, we're reminded that The Old Republic is the result of a dream alliance between master storytellers LucasArts and BioWare. Story drives choice, choice drives action, actions create emotional impact, and so on and so forth.

We get a swift demo of the Bounty Hunter class as he starts off on the planet of Hutta intent on winning The Great Hunt, a competition to find the greatest bounty hunter in the galaxy.

The Bounty Hunter struts his stuff.

"The Old Republic is a dream alliance between LucasArts and BioWare"

The interior of an Imperial transporter.

JEDI ORDER

Step into the light

Pyjama-wearing hippies, misguided terrorists or bastions of all that is good and right in the galaxy? Either way, if you choose to ally with this lot you'll accrue Light Side points that will unlock specifics skills such as unique Force powers. And balancing rocks.

Star Wars: TOR cont.

Taking on multiple enemies, the idea is to make you feel like a hero, even as you flambé them alive with your wrist-mounted flamethrower. The Smuggler class is also wheeled out, effectively a Han Solo character who fights dirty and uses what he can to his advantage. There's finally some new stuff, as the Sith Warrior class is revealed, albeit with the unlikely name of Stan. Specialising in melee combat with lightsabers, and a force charge like Darth Vader in The Empire Strikes Back, he is responsible for recovering artefacts, much like a space-based Tomb Raider.

One of the biggest deals of SW: TOR is that every single character is fully voiced, and it was revealed that the game will be released in English, French and German, with the latter demoed as proof. Simultaneously incongruous, yet strangely fitting, we can now at least claim to have seen a Jedi speak German.

As in the previous demo, we were shown a so-called flashpoint onboard an Imperial transporter, whereby the player has to decide whether to kill or spare a captain who has disobeyed a direct order. In this instance, the decision was put to the crowd, although a technical hitch meant that he was slaughtered like a pig and everyone who attended was given an 'I killed the captain badge.'

But what if you didn't kill him, and spared him his life as a reward for his independent thinking? The game would apparently play out entirely differently. In order to investigate this, we were whisked to a private room for a bit of hands-on action. Duly sparing the captain's life (following some lengthy chat) the big difference was that instead of turning right afterwards, we turned left. There, waves of invading enemies awaited, providing a first-hand taste of the game's combat. While it does inevitably involve pressing the number keys, it's a reasonably tactile affair with some varied moves, one of which involves leaping directly at the targeted enemy and taking him down with your lightsaber. And having killed and looted a trickier enemy, we wielded a pair of lightsabers to devastating effect. Which, we have to say, was even more entertaining than the dialogue…

Ord Mantell, and a military base.

SITH LORDS

Hello darkness my old friend…

The evil Empire, or the only ones providing a semblance of order in a chaotic galaxy? Opt to weigh in with this lot and you will of course be rewarded with Dark Side points, enabling you to perform ever more dastardly acts. Scum.

MMOZine Verdict

A lot of chat, a bit of action

HOW COMPLETE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Allods Online

Ladies and gentlemen, we are floating in space…

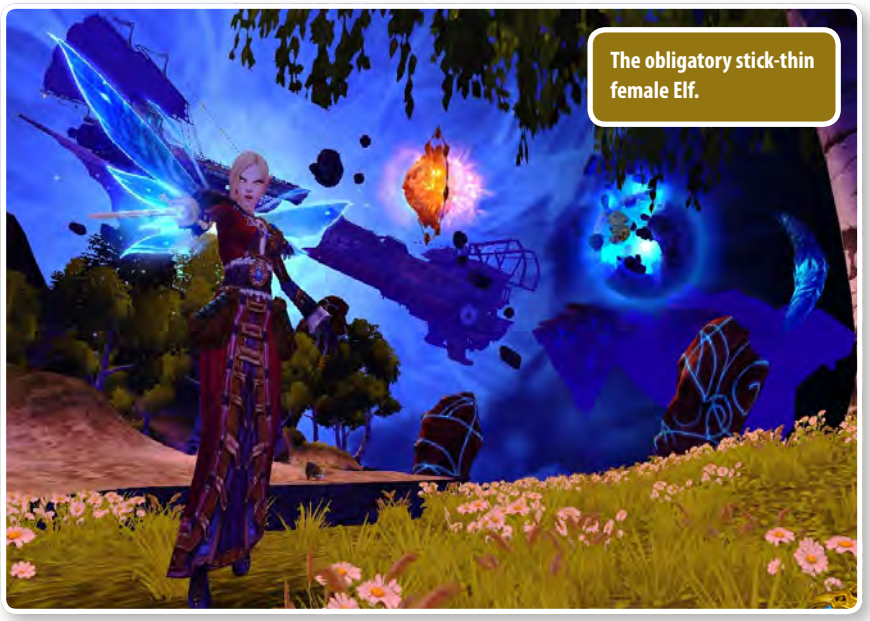
Publisher: gPotato
Developer: AstrumNival
Heritage: Heroes of Might & Magic
Link: www.allods.gpotato.eu
ETA: October 2009

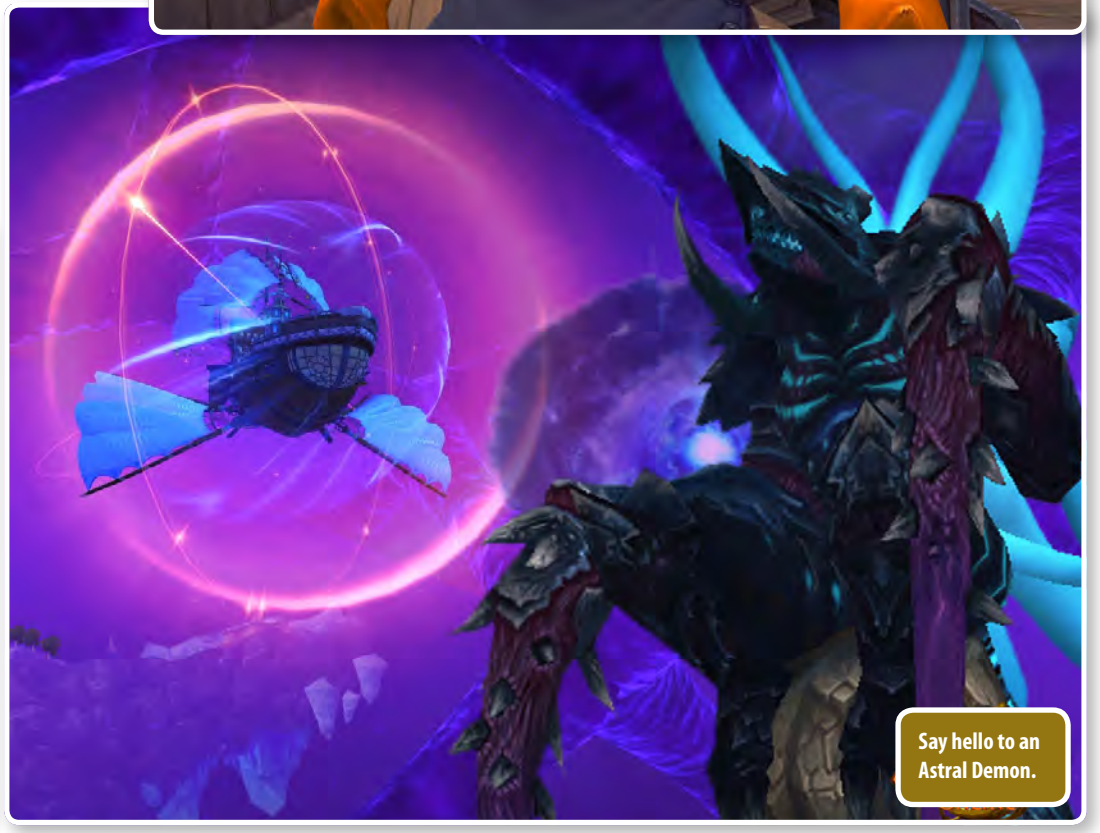
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Allods Online

An Englishman, an Irishman, a Frenchman and a Russian woman walk into a booth in Germany. It's not a joke, but a snapshot of the global operation behind Allods Online, the free-to-play fantasy space opera with a budget of $12m. Wherever the money has been invested, it's certainly not on the facilities at the recent GamesCom show in Cologne, which saw the game being demoed on a laptop in conditions that were cosy to say the least. As for where the money has come from, unprompted, the Frenchman points out that it's definitely not from the Russian Mafia.

With that small detail cleared up, what exactly is an Allod? Put simply, it's an island, albeit not in the traditional sense. There's no gentle lapping of the waves against the sun-kissed shore here, as these particular islands are to be found

Orcs can be construction workers too.


The obligatory stick-thin female Elf.


Say hello to an Astral Demon.

The Gibberlings have a motion-captured knees-up.

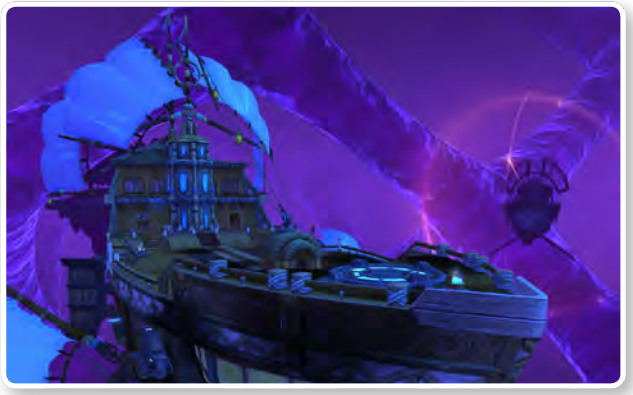
Operating a ship is all about teamwork.

Allods Online cont.

floating in what is known as the Astral Space. There are similarities to more conventional islands, however, in that you can travel to them in a ship, with more than a nod to classic RPG Skies Of Arcadia.

While the ships may have a traditional Spanish galley look to them, they are equipped with all mod cons, including sails made from magical cloth and a permanent shield from the threat of the Astral Space. With the action taking place against a backdrop of a millennium-long conflict between the League and the Empire, the ships are also armed to the gills, with a slew of cannons able to issue a deadly broadside to enemy ships. Designed to encourage teamwork, operating a ship is a complex affair, with at least five people required to pilot it (three are needed simply to operate the steering wheel). With a maximum of 24 players per ship, there's a job for everyone – captain, navigator, helmsman, engineer, cannoneer – and goblin repairmen also help you out. Earning your own ship is reckoned to take between three weeks and a month to achieve, although this can be shortened by completing subquests.

Much of the gameplay involves raiding Allods, collecting loot and bringing it back home to share the wealth, something that should take around four hours. However, pirates stalk the Astral Space, and will board your ship and head for the treasure room, at which point the ship becomes a self-contained PvP area. There is also PvE action



Allods Online continued

on a huge scale, with your ship coming under threat from a series of monstrous Astral demons, which require three to four ships to take down, encouraging you to forget your differences and concentrate on the common foe. According to Astrum Nival, the game was originally developed to be PvE, then had a layer of PvP added.

With more than 1,500 quests to complete, 300 unique creatures to battle, and nine dungeons to explore, you shouldn't be shy of something to do, and you'll be able to choose from 28 distinct classes from across six races. Every race has been motion-captured (which may have taken a chunk of the budget), including the diminutive Gibberlings, otherwise known as dwarves, who were played by 'aspiring actors'. The Gibberlings come in threes, but work together as one unit. So in the case of an archer, one holds the bow, one pulls back the string, and the other fires the arrow, with each action separately motion-captured.

It's an example of the detail and high production values that are being pumped into the game, which also comes with a deep storyline, based on Astrum Nival's Rage Of Mages series. And it's all for free, although they will obviously be hoping to recoup the $12m with some tempting micro-transactions. Allods Online appears to be one game where 'free' doesn't mean 'cheap', and it is shaping up to be what marketing types call a genuine triple-A title. It doesn't shirk on any area of the genre, with a full crafting system in place, enabling you make clothes and weapons, or mine gems to use in alchemy.

"Goblin-o-ball is a variation on six-a-side football, replacing the ball with a Goblin"

A number of mini-games are also thrown in, including Russian Roulette and a variant of poker that enables you to go fishing. Our favourite though, is Goblin-o-ball, a variation of six-a-side football that we understand involves replacing the ball with a goblin. Good.

He's angry, got a massive sword and his mate is a rabid wolf. Best avoid him, then.

There's some ingenious design at work in the monsters.

MMOZine Verdict

An ambitious affair that doesn't need to cost you a penny

HOW COMPLETE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Subscribe to MMOZine

FREE! PC & MMO GAMES MAGS!

● Free gifts ● Professionally written ● Free to download
● Regular exclusives ● Fully interactive magazines

DON'T MISS OUT AGAIN SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE!

Over 50,000 people have already chosen to subscribe to one or more of our GamerZines and now receive notification of each new issue as soon as it's published. Why not join them and ensure you never miss another issue again?

www.gamerzines.com

Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: NCsoft
Heritage: Lineage II, Guild Wars, Guild Wars II
Link: www.aiononline.com
OUT NOW

Aion

Up, up and away, but can it stay airborne?

It's fair to say that Aion has been one of those rare games which has gripped the imagination of MMO gamers around the world. Focusing on the shattered world of Atreia, it's an epic game which allows players to become winged champions (known as Daeva) who must battle both the monstrous Balaur, as well as the opposite faction, for survival.

As a result of seeing a release in Korea last year, the Aion hype machine has been going at full blast all summer with a series of weekend closed Betas and then an open one. Now the game is in the wild, so what is Aion really like?

Poeta's Protector Auryn
Legionary: Whoa, it is Lord Auryn!
Legionary: Lord Auryn has come!
Legionary: Whoa, it is Lord Auryn!
Legionary: Now that Lord Auryn is here, the tide of the battle should turn in our favor.
Legionary: Now that Lord Auryn is here, the tide of the battle should turn in our favor.
Now that Lord Auryn is here, the tide of the battle should turn in our favor.
The Abyss is a dangerous place, even for the divine Daeva.

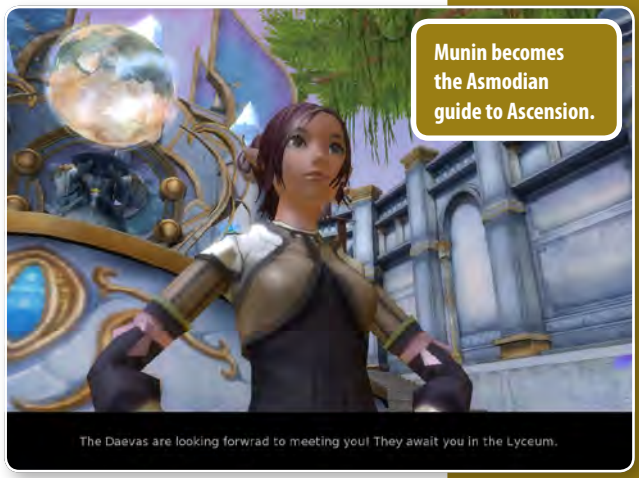
Roll over screen for annotations

Osmar
<Teleporter>
Memento Mori
Teaching A Lesson
Treblinkax defeated Uziel in a duel.
Uziel looks at Treblinkax and falls to the ground in despair.
The current screenshot was saved in C:Program Files\NCsoft\Aion (US)\screenshot\Aion0039.jpg.
Treblinkax: /mourn

Well, for starters, it's one of the most visually pleasing MMOs ever to grace the PC. It begins with the character customisation, which allows for a near infinite number of looks, and then continues at a rapid pace with the carefully designed zones that feature a dozen little extra neat touches – like rainbows refracting in sunlight or fish flying through the air. It's this attention to the smallest detail which really lifts Aion to new heights.

Story time

Both the Elyos and the Asmodians have histories rich in lore. Once a single species, they were separated when the great Tower of Eternity – the physical form of their divine creator, Aion – shattered. Forced apart and stranded on opposite sides of the world, each race has evolved. The Elyos have thrived thanks to being bathed in the light and Aether. As Daeva, they are mighty warriors with snow white wings but this has made them a tad arrogant. The Asmodians received little light; their homeland becoming cold and dark, which has led to more noticeable changes, such as talons, darker skin and manes. Those who become Daeva gain coal black wings and their eyes grow red when in combat.



Munin becomes the Asmodian guide to Ascension.

Transportation costs kinah so save, save, save!
Doman
<Teleporter>
Teaching A Lesson
Steal Odella from the Gray Mane Sentinels in the Odella Plantation, and bring them to Mijou.
Odella(2/5)
Altgard Duties
Meet Suthran, commander of Altgard Fortress.
Delivering Supply
Deliver the supply requests to Veldina.
Treasure Hunter Kalika
Altgard (622)
Daeva's Ceremony
Altgard Duties
time has not expired yet.
time has not expired yet.
Delivering Supply Request
<Supply Request>.

Aion continued

The lore behind these races is one of the big draws that Aion has going for it. The storyline totally enthrals and, like a good book, it simply won't let you go. As you level and enter the Abyss, even more of this lore is revealed to you, along with the Balaur, the ever-present creatures determined to destroy both the Elyos and Asmodians.

Aion screams polish, as befits a game which has taken a year to see a Western release. Indeed, the customisation options don't just end with your avatar but continue well into the game. The UI can be tinkered with to suit all kinds of players and the learning curve is perfectly balanced, whether you've played every MMO under the sun or are just dipping your toes in for the first time.

While both the starter zones share some similarities, graphically they couldn't be more different. However, NCsoft have taken pains to cover everything from tutorial videos that explain how to play or what the various symbols above NPCs' heads mean. Pressing M brings up a detailed map of the region – N brings up an overlay version – but you can also access an encyclopedia entry on a specific locale or NPC which will locate them on the map, just in case you get lost.

While the early zones seem small, the quest chains can be epic. No more so than with the one concerning your avatar's ascension to Daevahood. The lack of a mount means that getting around can sometimes take a while, even with a teleport spell that returns you to a soul binding point. By the time you hit the actual zones, the runs can take ages and be potentially deadly, however this forces you to think about where you're headed and whether your avatar is ready for it.

Experiencing Atreia

Levelling is important, but mercifully Aion seems to lack the need to mindlessly grind. The quests hubs are plentiful and you don't need to kill every mob in the area three times just to get the desired drops. It's almost refreshing, even if many of the servers were very over-crowded at launch.

The fantasy elements of Aion lend themselves well to role-playing but more interesting is the way in which PvP has been integrated into the game – the main PvPvE is confined to the Abyss, a desolate zone where the Elyos and Asmodians must fight each other as well as the Balaur.

Aion also offers world PvP in the form of rifts, which allow raiding parties to appear in enemy territory. While limiting level and numbers, these rifts give an added, more dangerous twist to the higher level zones. You cannot opt our of this PvP, it's an integral part of the game which also furthers the enmity between the two races in a kind of vicious circle.

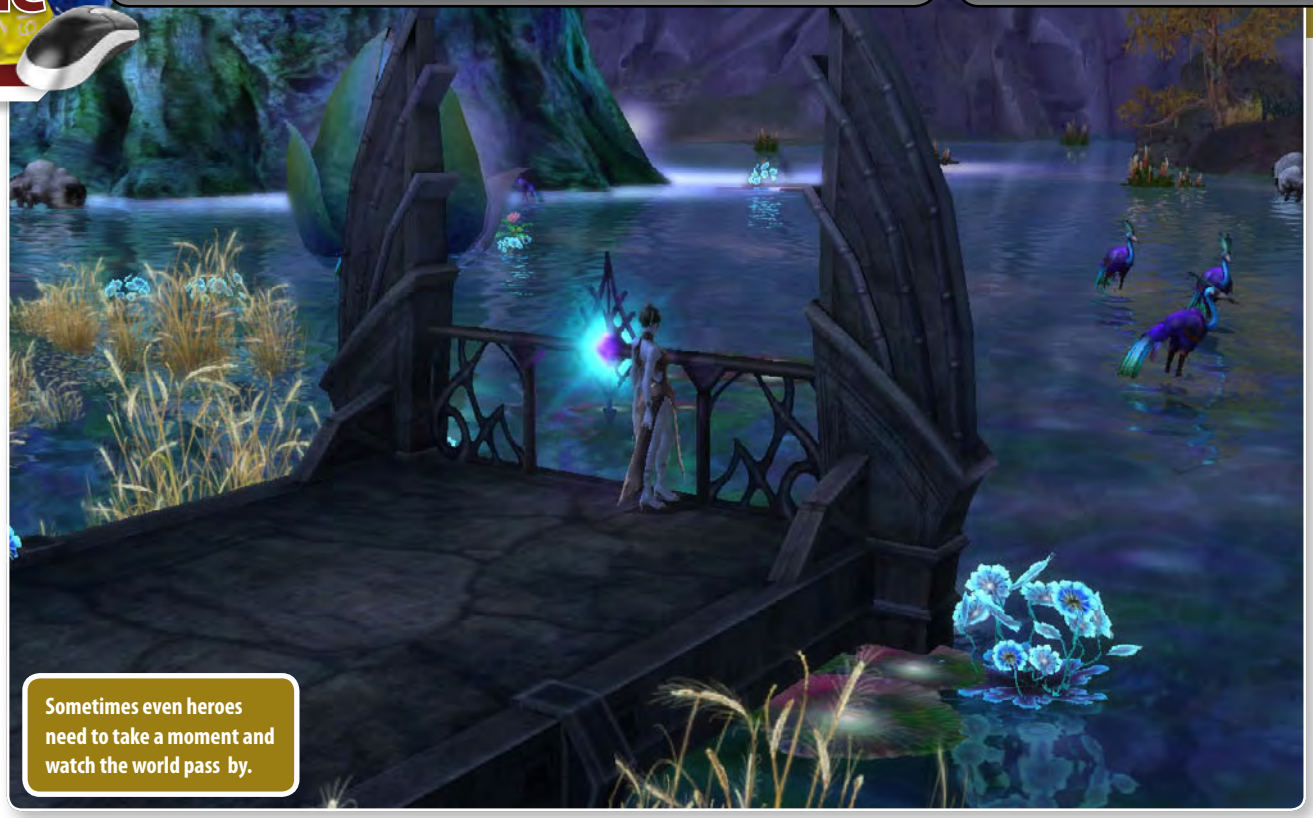
The faction wars are such a part of the game that you can only roll

HAVE WINGS, WILL FLY

MMORGs… now with wings

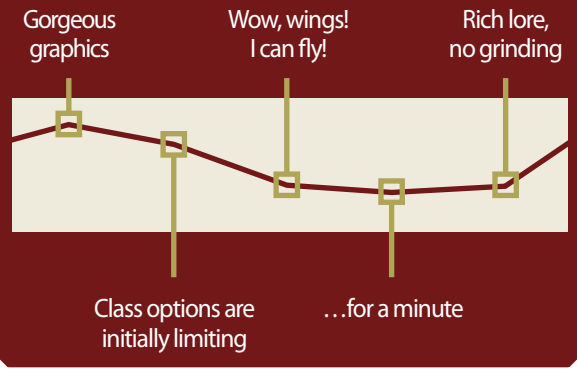
TELE-PORTATION | TIMER | ATREIA

Teleportation is an important (and fast) way to get around before and after you get your wings.



Sometimes even heroes need to take a moment and watch the world pass by.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life



Aion is one of those games which comes along once in a blue moon and promises so much. But, for it to actually deliver and do so well, that's something almost unheard of. Some are hailing Aion as the next WoW but that's not really the case. It's carving out its own niche and is pushing the MMO genre forward, learning from the past and embracing the future.

Aion continued

characters on one faction per server, just as WoW did on PvP servers in the good old days. But for Aion, this is so much more than a gaming choice, it's one of the main building blocks of the game and its lore.

In the same way, flight is at the heart of the whole game, even if the amount of time you can use it and the places are strictly limited. The reasons for this are enshrined in the game's lore but some might find it frustrating. This isn't the case (far from it, in fact) and the limitations mean you will value this power even more, particularly when it comes to combat in the Abyss.

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game, one step at a time…

1 MINUTE
Creating your avatar can be just as time consuming as the game itself.

4 HOURS
The game gently guides you to new areas so don't rush to higher zones.

12 HOURS
Ascension beckons, but you have to do a really long quest chain first.

16 HOURS
Time to stretch your wings and spend five hours just flying around.

5 DAYS
Finally the Abyss, and the promises of some red-hot PvPvE beckon.

MMOZine Verdict

Aion promises a lot, only to deliver – and then some

- Totally engaging storyline
- Fantastic attention to detail throughout
- You can fly!

CrimeCraft

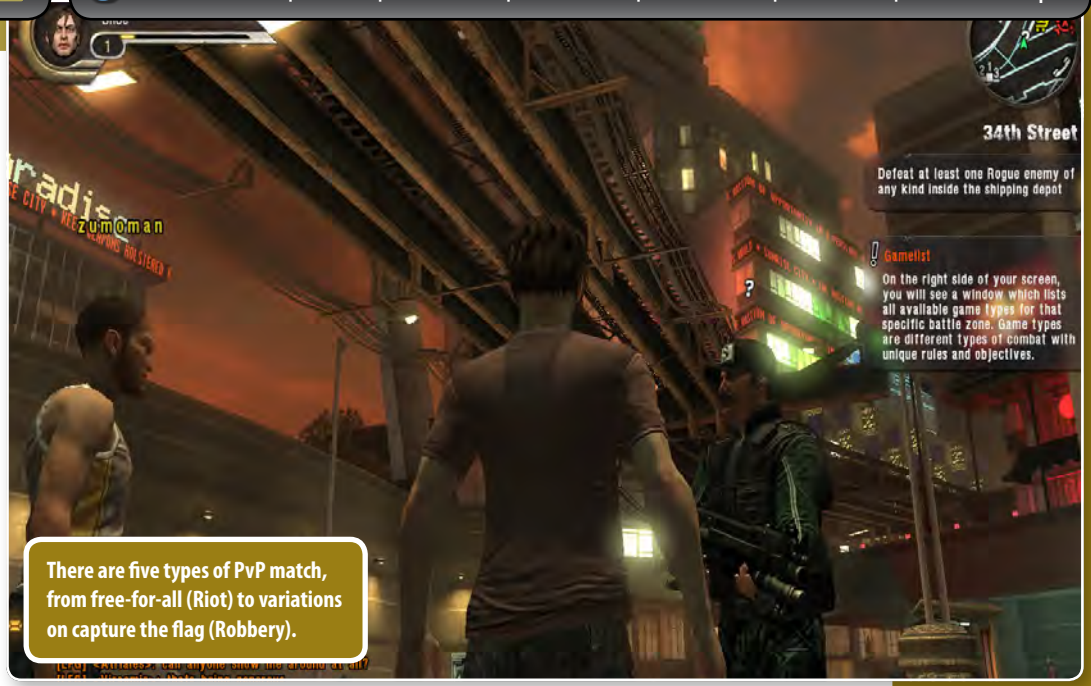
D'ya wanna be in my gang?

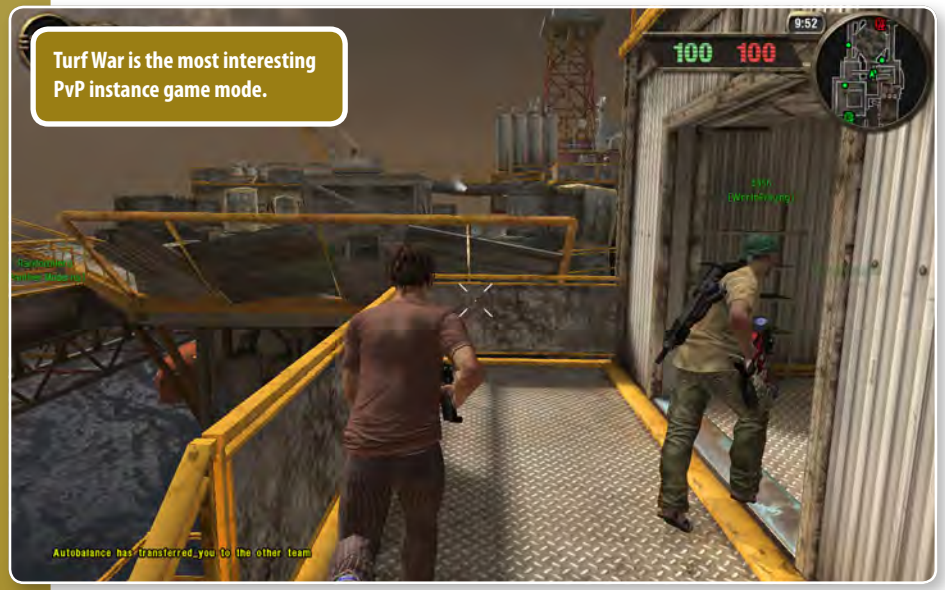
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Vogster Entertainment
Heritage: Robocalypse (DS/Wii)
Link: www.crimecraft.com
OUT NOW

While some will argue over what features constitute an MMOG, when it comes to coverage, if a game claims to be an MMOG then it opens itself up to criticism as one. CrimeCraft goes one better by aligning its very name with the most recognisable MMOG on the planet, which is as obvious a statement of intent as you can find.

Wishful thinking aside, CrimeCraft is a fun little game. Set in a near-future city devastated by natural disasters and blighted by a shortage of resources, it is a gangland shooter where you as a young person of ill-defined means must rise through the ranks, preferably as an active member of the right gang. If you imagine a kind of Unreal Tournament where the PvP and botmatch maps and game modes are linked by a lobby of corridors and walkways, then you're pretty much imagining CrimeCraft.

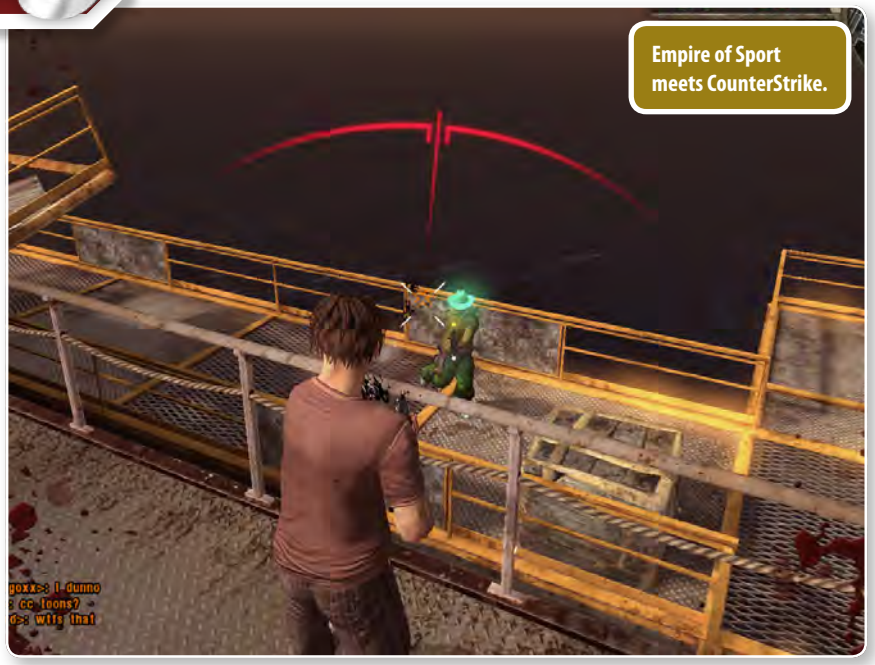
With the battles fought across tight instanced maps between a dozen


ZumOman
34th Street
Defeat at least one Rogue enemy of any kind inside the shipping depot
Gamelist
On the right side of your screen, you will see a window which lists all available game types for that specific battle zone. Game types are different types of combat with unique rules and objectives.
There are five types of PvP match, from free-for-all (Riot) to variations on capture the flag (Robbery).



Turf War is the most interesting PvP instance game mode.

Stockpile maps are CrimeCraft's version of grinding.



CrimeCraft continued

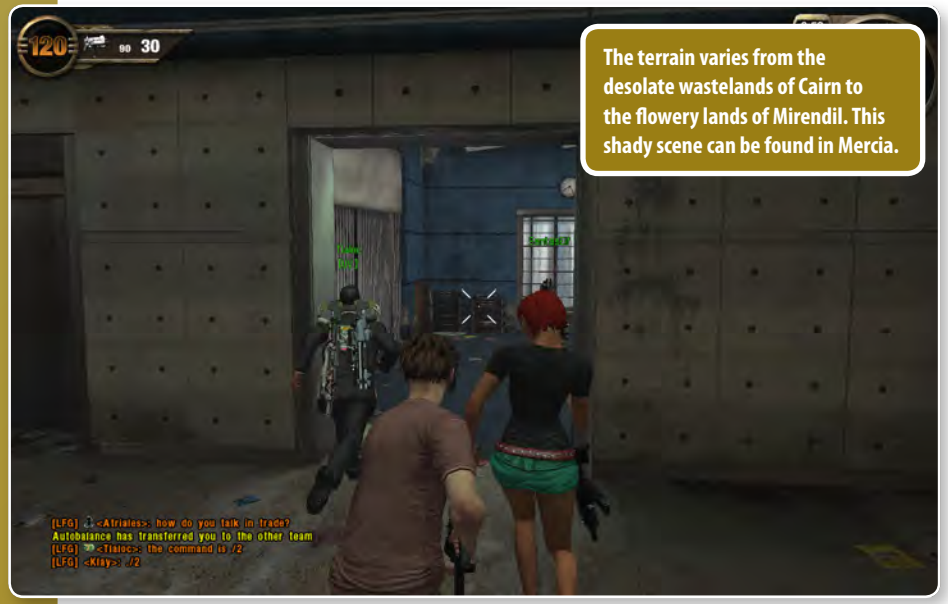
or so players, the persistence of the world is the one that exists outside of the fighting arenas. Taking part in PvP and PvE matches earns experience of course, as well as seemingly random loot depending on your achievements. Experience buys you Skill Points and the loot comes in handy for resale and in the manufacture of clothes, weapons, attachments, mods, meds and other sundry upgrades.

As a process crafting works well enough, but gathering the raw materials is just as tedious as any other game. Missions are typically fetch-and-carry in nature, but thankfully in CrimeCraft mission running is not the meat on which most players should expect to feast. The main draw of CrimeCraft is in the warring and as a shooter there's enough to gorge on. The third-person camera works well, the controls are responsive and the graphics are as good as any other third-party Unreal-powered game of the current generation.

Quality is less of a concern than longevity. With three sectors to

Is there enough of an MMO here? Time will tell.
Officer McKenna
Instance Entrance
X-Align Shipping
Stockpile
Name: X-Align Shipping, Type: Easy Stockpile, Time: 7 min;
Score: 150, Warmup: 0, Players: 1 - 8.
STP : X-Align Shipping
Session #1
3 / 8
24 minute(s)
STP : X-Align Shipping
Your level must be from 1 to 6
Leave

This is a small fraction of this sprawling city located on the desert island of Cairn, in the south-eastern corner of Agon.



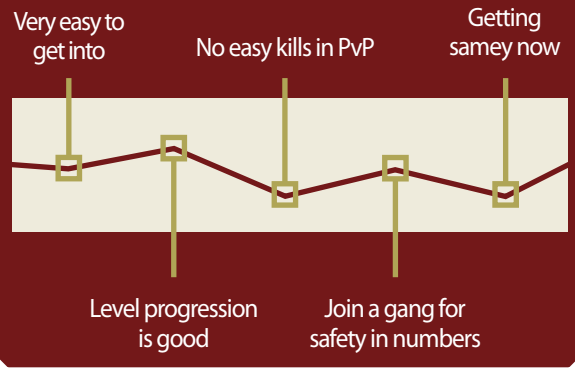
The terrain varies from the desolate wastelands of Cairn to the flowery lands of Mirendil. This shady scene can be found in Mercia.

CrimeCraft continued

Sunrise City and 14 maps, it's not a game for those who like to explore. Beyond winning bragging rights after a close match with other gangs, neither is there much of a recognisable end-game. Some sort of territorial mechanic would seem an obvious evolution to make, but whatever the developers have in store they will likely have to do more than allow gangs to have hideouts and trophy cabinets if they want to develop a veteran community around the game.

As fun as CrimeCraft is as a shooter, there are better, cheaper options that don't require any extra investment past the initial software cost. CrimeCraft requires a subscription, which is thankfully much cheaper than most MMOs, but with microtransactions being gently pushed on you, as well as in-game advertising displayed in most parts of the city, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Vogster are a little unsure about what business model to pursue. If the game goes freeplay, which is increasingly common, then you may want to hold off. But then the longer you do so, the closer the release of APB gets, and although CrimeCraft is enjoyable in its own right, APB has a greater pedigree behind it and promises to offer a more dynamic world of the kind MMO gamers are used to.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life



MMOZine Verdict

It's a fair cop

- ✓ Enjoyable shooting action
- ✓ Unique among MMOs
- ✗ Persistence, but not enough world

gamerzines
www.gamerzines.com

FREE MAGAZINES FOR PC GAMES, MMOS, PLAYSTATION 3, WII, PSP & DS AND MORE.

MORE FREE MAGAZINES! LATEST ISSUES!

NEW FEATURE! CLICK ON A COVER TO DOWNLOAD LASTEST ISSUE WITHOUT LEAVING THIS MAGAZINE!

Just click here to download the latest issue of PCGZine while you read...

PCGZine
FREE! For PC gamers

Just click here to download the latest issue of P3Zine while you read...

P3Zine
FREE! For PlayStation 3

Just click here to download the latest issue of 360Zine while you read...

360Zine
FREE! For Xbox 360

FREE!
360Zine
Issue 35 | October 2009
GTA IV DLC
Hands-on with Gay Tony
Free Magazine For Xbox 360 Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...
ASSASSIN'S CREED II
To die for... Hands-on with the year's most anticipated game.
PLUS!
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW INSIDE!
PREVIEW DJ HERO
REVIEW NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT
PREVIEW MODERN WARFARE 2

Just click here to download the latest issue of PlayZine while you read...

PLAYZINE
FREE! For Wii, DS & PSP

CONTROL Close Issue | Print Page | Search Issue | Zoom In | Zoom Out | Toggle Full Screen | Previous Page | Next Page

PLAY AGAIN

Around a world in 14 days*

(*or however long the trail period lasts)

Part 5: Ultima Online

It's hard to imagine UO ever shutting down.

12 years on and still going strong, does the godfather of the modern MMOG demand respect, or, like Richie Shoemaker, has the world left it behind?

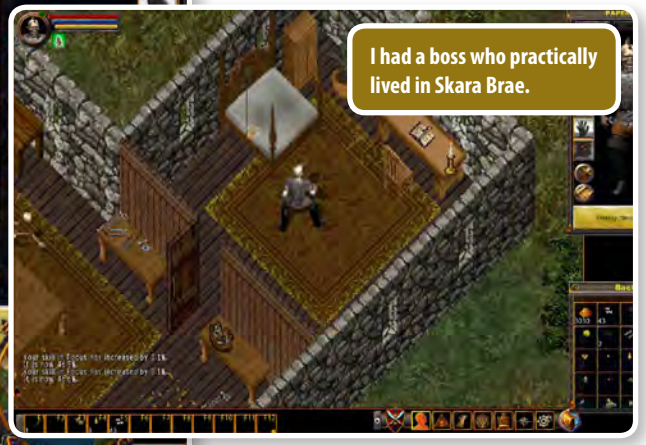
It can't ever lay claim to being the very first, but as Doom is to the modern shooter, Ultima Online's status as the game that defined the MMORPG genre will always be beyond dispute. Unless of course you believe Ultima Underworld beat Doom to the FPS podium (which it did, as it even came out before Wolfenstein 3D), in which case, Ultima in all its various guises has much to answer for.

Saying that, just as you would be hard-pressed to get make it through a full session of Doom – or Underworld for that matter – without relying on nostalgia to pull you through, it must surely follow that the only thing that Ultima Online has going for it is that it offers a few die-hards the opportunity to live out their twilight MMO careers happy in the knowledge that the WoW whippersnappers won't ever bother them. That's the perception anyway, one that I suspected wasn't true, but I decided to investigate anyway. After all, with a new expansion released just

Stygian Abyss is the first UO expansion since 2006.

Player housing is off the menu for trial players.

Elwood McCarrin The Well-Known Collector
Sarsmea Smythe The Focus Instructor
Anira Cuilwen [TNH]
Adelle The Mapmaker
Maxine Shine [TIC]
Melva The Bride
Gray Hur
Donovan The Fisherer
You are now under the protection of the town guards.
You have left the protection of the town guards.
Your skill in Focus has increased by 0.2%. It is now 26.9%.
You are now under the protection of the town guards.
PAPERDOLL
ARMOR
They don't make 'em like this anymore.


I had a boss who practically lived in Skara Brae.

Replay continued

last month and the game having just entered an unrivalled 13th year of operation, there must be some new features to complement the old?

There is the Stygian Abyss, a vast subterranean burrow that is claimed to be the biggest dungeon in the game. Happily for the old guard, the Stygian Abyss was also the setting of the very first Underworld, which is as enduring a feature as you're ever likely to get. The bad news for me is that as a trial account player, I'm never going to see it.

What you do see initially when you first login is an isometric view of a world that almost seems to have avoided the passage of time. I played UO back in 1997 when the game was in Beta, and briefly when it was released and it seemed quaintly behind the times even then. It's hard to believe that 12 years of development have increased the resolution, added particle effects and caved in to the demands of other graphical advances, because however you cut it, UO looks and feels as old and as distant as the decade it represents. And yet, with so many persistent world games that offer largely the same features and identical interfaces, UO comes across as defiantly unique.

After a couple of frustrating hours punching at the wrong keys and having to wrestle with an interface that is by no means as friendly as you'd imagine it to be, you find yourself warming to the game. Even the music, which veers from jaunty twang to ominous dirge as you step from the road into the forest, then switches back again if you take a step back. It's so bad it's good.

It's hard to believe Ultima Online was the WoW of its day, and yet it's easy to see why so many continue to hold the game in such high regard. UO's was a harsh world, with players picked upon by griefers (PK'ers as we used to call them), and non-consensual PvP combat was the norm. Over the years, UO was forced down a friendlier route, which was probably a good thing in some respects. Over in Iceland, frustrated at the direction UO had gone down, a bunch of developers stopped playing Ultima and started planning EVE. True story.

UO is hard to go back to, even for more than a few hours, but like your old school, it's important to visit at least once. It was a formative game and remains an important staging post for tens of thousands of players because there still isn't a game like it. Maybe that says considerably more about the state of MMOGs today than the persistence of Ultima Online. ●

UO2 was canned in 1999, but it inspired Tabula Rasa.

In MMOZine Issue 16

FREE! Click here to send MMOZine to your mates

EVE: DOMINATION

With a new expansion ready to launch, another being planned and an EVE shooter also announced, we look to the future of the world's favourite space MMOG

PLUS!

Reviews of Runes of Magic: Elven Legacy, Cities XL and Fallen Earth

Previews of Mortal Online and Siege of Mirkwood

MMOZine Issue 16

Out 10th November!

DON'T MISS ISSUE 16 SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE!

WARNING! MULTIMEDIA DISABLED!

If you are reading this, then you didn't choose "Play" when Adobe Reader asked you about multimedia when you opened the magazine.

Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

Cranberry Publishing Limited
www.cranberrypublishing.com
Publishing Director: Dave Taylor
Email: dave.taylor@cranberrypublishing.com
Editorial Director: Dan Hutchinson
Email: dan.hutchinson@cranberrypublishing.com
Commercial Director: Duncan Ferguson
Email: duncan.ferguson@cranberrypublishing.com
Telephone: 07770 648500
Call Duncan to discover how e-publications can work for you!

All rights reserved. This publication may be copied in its entirety without modification for non-commercial purposes, for example but not limited to copying to CD-R for a friend, but it may not be offered for download from any website or similar without the prior permission of the copyright holder. You are free to, and encouraged to, link to the original file for download from our website and you can find help on doing so here. While the greatest care is taken in producing this guide, we do not accept responsibility for the loss of any data or any other damage caused by following the instructions in this publication. We always recommend that you keep a backup of your hard disk data and ensure that you check all files for viruses before installing or using any new software. None of the information in this guide is intended as legal advice. All articles are for information purposes only. Websites mentioned in this publication are not affiliated to or controlled by the publisher. We are not responsible for the contents of these sites or any changes made to them.
All contents © Cranberry Publishing Ltd 2009
Company registration number: 4987058

Want more PC Games?

Sadly, you've reached the end of this issue. What would you like to do now?

Exit this issue and go and download another issue?

Exit this issue and subscribe FREE for future issues?

Exit. **Continue to Aion Supplement.**

AION
EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST
RISING UP!
Explore the beautiful world of Atreia as we show you how to Ascend
LORE OF THE WINGS
Discover the lore behind Cataclysm and the origins of Asmodians and Elyos
AVATAR PERFECTION
We show you how to customise the perfect avatar
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!
Get the pre-launch low-down from Associate Producer Lani Blazier

CLICK HERE TO CONTINUE TO AION SUPPLEMENT

N4G news for gamers

THE WORLD'S BEST SOCIAL NEWS SITE FOR GAMERS!

http://www.n4g.com/

News 4 Gamers is a news website written by gamers for gamers. Each story is submitted by a member of the community and ranked by popularity. You can comment on each article, and even if you're not a fully fledged writer, you can submit news tips for items you've seen elsewhere on the web!

The site has sections for all gaming platforms including PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii, PC, DS, PSP and more.

When you read a story on N4G, you can click to go straight out to the full story source, making this the ultimate gaming news site, because it gives you access to the stories from all the games sites on the web, rather than just its own.

AION

EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST

RISING UP!

Explore the beautiful world of Atreia as we show you how to Ascend

LORE OF THE WINGS

Discover the lore behind Cataclysm and the origins of Asmodians and Elyos

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

Get the pre-launch low-down from Associate Producer Lani Blazier

AVATAR PERFECTION

We show you how to customise the perfect avatar

WELCOME

The shattered world of Atreia is calling. As the launch of NCsoft's latest MMO, Aion: The Tower of Eternity, kicks off later this month, it's high time we took a deeper and more in-depth look at the realms of the angelic Elyos and their hardy brethren, the demonic-looking Asmodians.

The lush realm of Elysea and the colder land of Asmodae beckon. You are about to enter a world rich in landscape and lore, where two opposing factions fight a third known as the Balaur – as well as among themselves, too. The entire shattered shell of Atreia itself is at stake as the immortal Daeva take flight and do battle at the planet's core.

Hotly anticipated since before its Korean launch last year, Aion has transfixed everyone who has come across it. A series of weekend Beta tests throughout the summer has only intensified interest in this graphically stunning MMO. With the European launch taking place on September 25th, this excitement is now reaching fever pitch.

The game's rich lore and fascinating mythology is enhanced by breathtaking graphics and the promise of PvPvE unlike anything we've played before. Unlike other MMOs, there will be choices and consequences to your actions as your chosen avatar quests to divine their past or their inevitable destiny. So join us now, as we take you into Atreia and ascend to the heavens for a closer look at the world of Aion.

Enjoy the issue,

Lesley Smith

Contents

Aion mythology 03

Characters 05

Getting started 07

Ascension 10

PvP 12

Interview 15

Next steps 18

LORE AND LEGEND

"In the beginning, the deity known as Aion created the world"

The history of Aion and the Tower of Eternity

MMOs are legendary for their core mythology, the world lore which sets up the entire game and makes you want to play. Aion is no different. In the beginning, the deity known as Aion created the world. He filled the world with life from fauna and flora to mortal humans, but then also created the terrible Drakan.

The Tower of Eternity – from which the game takes its name – was the physical manifestation of Aion, a beacon which drew all of humanity to worship their creator as well as a physical bridge between the two halves of the planet.

Of course, things didn't stay that way. The Books of the Elyos and Asmodians, which can be viewed on the game's official Wiki page, tell of a day when the Drakan changed, when they forgot their task to safeguard Atreia and went rogue. Overseen by five Dragon Lords, the Drakan began to slaughter humanity and enslave the other sentient races of Atreia, becoming the Balaur.

However, legend tells that Aion did not forget his creation. Instead coming to their aid, albeit indirectly, by selecting 12 souls and imbuing them with Aether – Aion's 'life essence' – which transformed them both physically and spiritually.

They became, in effect, demi gods and humanity's protectors – otherwise known as the Empyrean Lords. They, in turn, found humans with the potential to Ascend and gain wings, naming them Daeva.

Peace talks which were meant to bring the Millennium War to a close ultimately collapsed when one of the Dragon Lords

> Aion history continued

was killed. Why or how remains lost in the mists of time, but the ensuing Cataclysm literally tore the planet in two as the Tower of Eternity itself shattered, taking the lives of its guardians, Siel and Israphel, in the process. But the two Lords did not die in vain. They were able to save the planet from doom, or at least postpone it.

Picking a leader

Humanity and the Empyrean Lords – later known as the Seraphim and Shedim Lords respectively – had already begun to gravitate towards one of two leaders. Either Ariel, Lady of Light and protectress of those who would become the angelic Elyos, or Azphel, Lord of Darkness and protector of the Asmodians. Siel and Israphel ordered Ariel and her four companions to protect the southern half of the tower, while Azphel and the remaining four Lords were sent to defend the northern half. Both species maintain that the other failed in their duties, leading to the collapse of the Tower and the inevitable demise of their world.

> "The Elyos and Asmodians are sworn enemies and this forms the basis of the PvP element of Aion"

Cut off from each other, both races evolved in seclusion. The Elyos became convinced Aion had saved them and ensured they lived in Paradise, causing their skins to pale and the Aether falling from the shattered Tower imbued them with long lives and good crops. The Asmodians, meanwhile, found themselves battling for survival in a hostile and cold region which caused them to become very different from their original forms.

But no matter how much time passed, both blamed the other for the Cataclysm, so when they were finally reunited – during exploration of the eerie Abyss – things did not go well. Now the Elyos and the Asmodians are sworn enemies and this forms the basis for the PvP element of The Tower of Eternity, specifically the ability to jump through Rifts and attack enemy territory. However, both sides also continue to fight against the Balaur – who were exiled to the Abyss and are server-controlled – that makes up the PvPvE element.

Aether is fast running out, which explains why Daeva can only fly in select areas. Atreia is dying and both the Elyos and the Asmodians now seek to end the impasse between their races. Victory now means not only the chance of proving themselves to be the better race, but it also means survival for the winners and their species. This is what forms the back bone of Aion: The Tower of Eternity. The only question is: Are you ready to jump in and see the world for yourself? ●

Different classes are identifiable by their early clothing.

MAKING MMO MYTH

Are you sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin…

Considering Aion has its origins in Korea, the mythology is familiarly Western. The Elyos and Asmodians have their origins in the near universal idea of angels and demons, while the creator god Aion shares parallels with various deities from Yahweh to Mithras. The names of the Seraphim and Shedim Lords share similarities with those of Biblical literature. But that's not all, as the names of other NPCs and even locations have origins in Norse and even Babylonian myth.

Take the Balaur general Ereshkigal (who Elyos must fight as part of their Ascension quest line), who shares her name with the Babylonian goddess of death and the Underworld. The city of Pandaemonium has a bridge called Vifrost and features NPCs called Balder and Heimdall, while their Ascension quest involves visiting hermits called Verdandi, Urd and Skuld, all taken from the Eddas of Norse myth.

Even the most mundane things have a sparkle of magic about them.

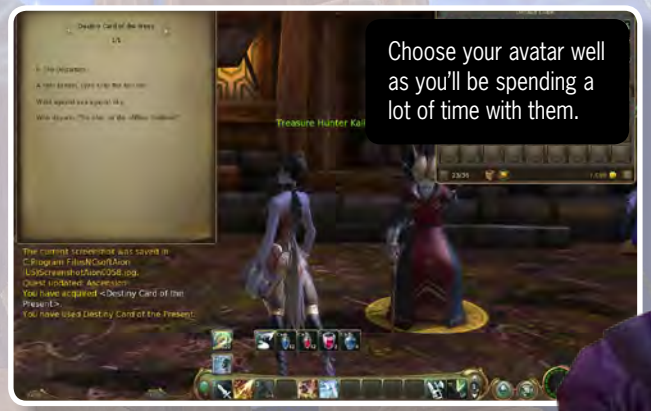
ACCENTUATING YOUR AVATAR

Character Creation 101

Every MMO starts with the creation of your avatar, and it's here that Aion has something special in store for you. You begin with a simple choice: Which faction do I play? Your decision can depend on many things, from what your friends are playing to the game's lore or even just whether you prefer the Elyos' pure white wings over the Asmodians' blacker, more leathery version.

On the race selection screen there's a paragraph of lore, outlining each race and giving even the player who has never heard of the game, the chance to be a little bit more informed about which faction to pick. Regardless of which you choose, both have their own unique cosmetic look and a comprehensive character creation process.

The next stage is choosing a gender and class. Aion offers four main classes: the Scout, Mage, Warrior and Priest, and each will be familiar to anyone who has ever played an MMO. The Warrior is a well-built fighter, able to give and take a lot of damage. Scouts are more delicate and agile but great with sneaking around and dealing close-range damage. Priests are magic users who are primarily healers, able to use their faith to resurrect the dead – but who also have some skill in melee combat. Finally, the Mages are your atypical squishy spellcaster, able to deal devastating damage at long range,



UNIQUENESS IS THE KEY

Making your character stand out

If the number of faces and forms, looks and likenesses weren't enough, the character creation process has a couple more tweeks up its sleeve. There's a lot of detail – from the emotive look in the eyes to the way hair is bound in a clasp or braided – and this is all-important, as your avatar will be taking a very active role in many of the cut-scenes used in the game. The nicest touches are the ability to give your toon little features, like freckles or full-on tattoos, that push them even further away from generic character models.

> Characters continued

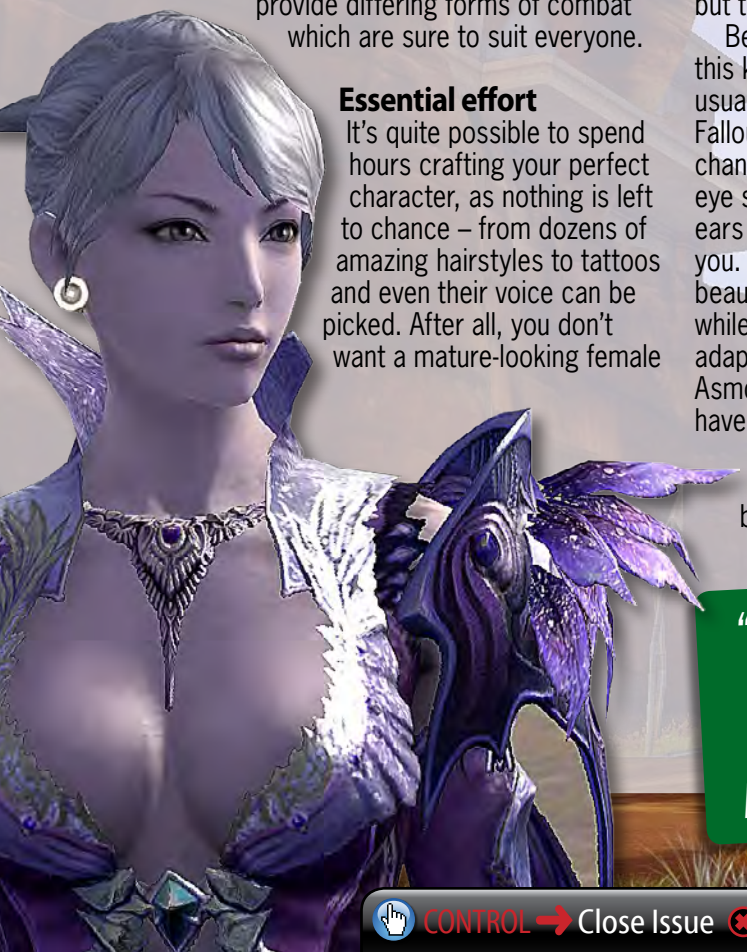
but as a downside, they are also rather easy to kill at close range.

Each class has two sub-classes but you don't need to worry about those until Ascending to Daevahood at level 9. For now it's a simple matter of picking the kind of combat you enjoy. The class options might seem a little limiting – even when taking gender into account – but they provide differing forms of combat which are sure to suit everyone.

Essential effort

It's quite possible to spend hours crafting your perfect character, as nothing is left to chance – from dozens of amazing hairstyles to tattoos and even their voice can be picked. After all, you don't want a mature-looking female mage who sounds like a 12 year old, do you? This is actually a good thing, especially if you're going to be spending levels 1-50 with this avatar, so it's well worth the effort. You can also see what your toon will look like in their undergarments, starter clothing as well as more advanced gear. We're not quite sure why you need to see them in their underwear but there's got to be a reason, right?

Beyond the basic refinements, this kind of character creation is usually found in RPGs like Oblivion or Fallout 3, not in an MMO. You can change your avatar's height, size, eye shape and even give them pointy ears if you so wish. It's entirely up to you. The Elyos have a standard, if beautiful, humanoid appearance, while the Asmodians have evolved to adapt to the harsh, cold climate of Asmodae. As a result, their skins have become paler, developing an almost bluish tinge in those with fairer skin. Their feet have become talons which, in the women, look a lot like stilettos! Plus their eyes glow deep red in combat which is certainly edging towards the 'evil' and 'demonic' monikers with which you could label this misunderstood race.



"It's quite possible to spend hours crafting your perfect character"

NPCs offer a glimpse of what your avatar will be wearing at 50.

So your avatar is named and ready to step out into the Aion world. Next we're going to have a closer look at the starting zones of Poeta and Ishalgen in the lands of Elysea and Asmodae. ●

AION EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

ENHANCED VIEW

ENTERING THE WORLD OF ATREIA

"In true MMO style, the quests are divided between killing mobs, delivering packages and retrieving certain items"

A closer look at Poeta and Ishalgen

Stepping into Atreia, regardless of which side of the shattered world it is on, it's hard not to be struck by the beauty of this ethereal world. The first thing you're likely to see is the shattered remnants of the Tower of Eternity, a constant reminder of the cataclysm which caused all this chaos in the first place.

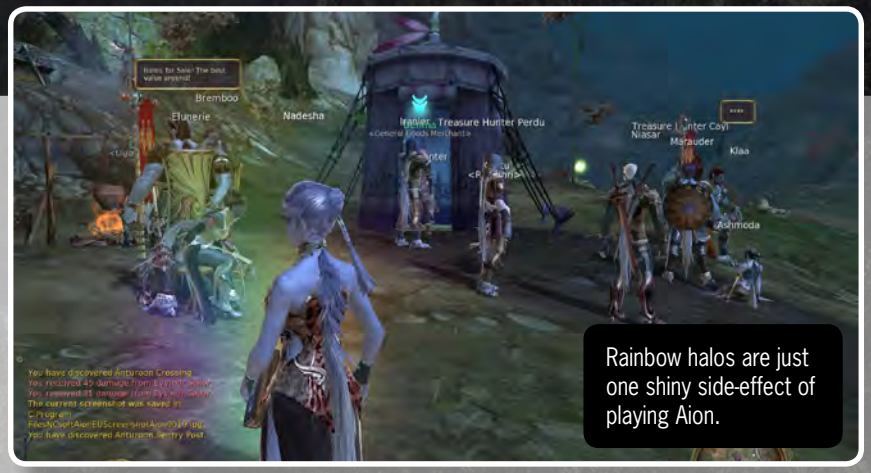
Your avatar appears in an island starter zone, which is designed to walk you through the first 10 levels and enable your ascension. Poeta, the Elyos' starter area, is a lush land bathed in sunlight featuring a forest of mushrooms and fertile plains but tainted by a strip mine. Ishalgen, on the other hand, is just as beautiful but in a much starker way – even featuring its own prison camp – and has its share of lush locales, including a plantation and Tunapre Lake, which must be visited at twilight for the full effect.

NPCs serve to gently guide you from place to place. In true MMO style, the quests are divided between killing mobs, delivering packages and retrieving certain items. As with any MMO, levelling can be done just by killing wandering mobs like Kerubim

Priests are a common sight in the human settlements of Atreia.

Roll over screen for annotations

>World of Atreia continued



Rainbow halos are just one shiny side-effect of playing Aion.

and bison, but the number of quests is such that if you complete them all then you will easily hit level nine.

As well as just regular quests, however, there are also campaign ones which are akin to faction grinding. Once they are complete, as well as gaining renowned and respect, you are granted a special title which offers some kind of stat gain, and you're also able to chop and change them depending on your class and level.

Featuring an extremely useful and comprehensive map and encyclopedia (which even locates NPCs and areas where mobs can be found), Aion has learnt lessons from other MMOs, even placing an agro-radar around hostile mobs which allows you to tip-toe around them without setting them off – even if you do, the sudden appearance of a question mark above their head should send you running or reaching for your weapon. At the same time, mobs are coloured so you can easily tell their intentions – yellow will attack you if you hit them, while red are already baying for your blood.

> "Aion has learnt lessons from other MMOs, even placing an agro-radar around hostile mobs."

As you explore the more dangerous parts of each island, more of the lore becomes >

AION
EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

ENHANCED VIEW

Different symbols denote different stages in quests – this one means you're done.

> World of Atreia continued

apparent. The Elyos for example have created a new civilisation, their villages have buildings and they are naturally kindhearted and helpful. They accept help gladly and there's a true community spirit, while those who Ascend are treated with respect. The Asmodians, on the other hand, seem naturally distrustful of one another and Daeva in particular look down upon Raiders, the band of mercenaries in which all Asmodians begin. The settlements in Ishalgen are tents with services taking place on the ruins of a church. There's been little rebuilding, and as a race the Asmodians seem mired in the past, unable to move forward and embrace their fate, because they're still in denial.

Gathering is an important tool, which serves as a precursor to the crafting abilities you can learn at level 10. It starts with you being asked to gather the herb angelica and soon progresses to fruit and even ore, as well as getting kudos and the odd quest reward, you can also sell it for cold, hard Kinah. One plant often has as many as six pieces, so it's just a matter of being patient and levelling up the skill.

> "It's obvious from the first moments that your avatar is not just any character"

Once you Ascend, you can only collect such items outside of Poeta and Ishalgen. Being an immortal, you no longer need the items in the same way as mere mortals – instead you extract vitality from the items you try to gather. However, you can now learn proper professions like alchemy, weapon-making, tailoring and cooking. You're not restricted to just one or two either, you can learn all of them but can only max out one for each character you play.

But of course, this is just the start. It's obvious from the first moments that your avatar is not just any character. They are not destined to tread the paths of mortals but to rise to the realm of the Daeva and take flight; they are going to Ascend.

EMBRACING DESTINY

"Ascension is not a single quest; it's more of a rite of passage"

Ascending to Daevahood

Destiny comes knocking for everyone, including your Elyosian or Asmodian avatar. From the moment the game starts, it's obvious you're not an average Joe. Elyosians will dream of forgotten battles at the heart of Atreia, while Asmodians will get hints that there is a powerful destiny calling to them.

Ascension is not a single quest; it's more of a rite of passage, a pilgrimage through each starter zone which ends in either the floating cities of Sanctum or Pandaemonium with a ceremony to manifest your wings and join the ranks of the Daeva. But being a Daeva it's not all about flying, it's about responsibility and joining an epic battle, which culminates at level 25 with the start of PvPvE at the drifting remnants of the planet's core. So how do you Ascend?

Well it all starts with a quest called 'Ascension' which pops up the moment you hit level 9. Both factions have their own chain but each will see your avatar summoned to a wise hermit. On the Elyosian side, Pernos will guide you in recovering your past while, for Asmodians, Munin will gaze into your future but you have to do your bit.

Whether it's a bit of potion-making or visiting the Atreian version of the three Fates, you will be all that bit

Something as simple as soul binding an item involves a splash of magic.

AION EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

ENHANCED VIEW

> Ascension continued

and ethical decisions to consider, such as shattering a friendship or shafting a fellow Raider. Of course, there is no option to say 'no' to complete the quests, even if you sometimes have the option of choice.

But it is during the Ascension quests that even more information about the different factions and its lore is revealed. The Elyos, for example, see the Daeva as Aion's chosen warriors, demi gods in their own right, while the Asmodians view these winged immortals as a higher class, and those who have already Ascended are elitist but incredibly fierce in combat.

The process also teaches you the rest of the game mechanics you need to know, as well as introducing the other races of Atreia – principally the hostile Mau and Krall, and the neutral Shugo. However, this is also the time to choose what kind of class your avatar will become.

> "Your wings must be bestowed upon you by a high-ranking Daeva"

Bacorerk
<Cube Artisan>
Kalika
Thinking Ahead
Talk with Boromer
The Search For Rae
Talk with Nobekk
Memento Mori
Talk with Derot
You have purchased <Erosion I>.
You have gained 10 EXP from Ulgorn.
Quest complete: Captain's Orders
Quest updated: Vanar's Flattery
You have earned 180 Kinah.
You have gained 950 EXP from Tobu.
Quest complete: Vanar's Flattery
Buy and sell wisely and save money, you'll need it later.

At the beginning of the game you had a choice of four main classes: Warrior, Scout, Mage and Priest. Now Warriors must choose to become either a Gladiator or a Templer, Scouts can be a Ranger or an Assassin, Mages can become elemental wielding Spiritmasters or Sorcerers, while Priests must choose either the path of the Cleric or the Chanter. While these choices are set, this doesn't mean you can't individualise them further, both cosmetically in terms of weapons and armour and with skills, using Stigma, Manastones and Godstones.

You'd think it would be a simple matter of completing the quests but, in keeping with the fantasy-feel of the game and the overall lore, it takes more than that to get your wings. They must be bestowed upon you by a high-ranking Daeva in either the city of Sanctum or Pandaemonium in a mystical rite. Ascension then allows you use teleporters to travel from continent and rifts to jump into enemy territory, as well as fly in selected Aether-heavy areas of Atreia. But this is not the end of your journey, it's merely the beginning, as your next milestone is the PvPvE content at the centre of the Abyss and then onto the level cap of 50, where you finally have a chance of making a stand against the Balaur and the opposing faction.

FLIGHT 101

Thank you for flying Aion airlines

Flying is the most touted feature of The Tower of Eternity, but it also happens to be one of the most restricted. You can fly for one minute at a time, though this can be extended using items in-game and buffs. Page Up summons your wings while R allows you to rise, F sends you drifting towards the ground while the space bar sets you gliding on air currents (this works regardless of where you are in the world). If you need to land, just press Page Down and your wings will disappear in the blink of an eye. It's a simple control system which works really well, even if it is restrictive – but it might also save your bacon if you fall off a ledge.

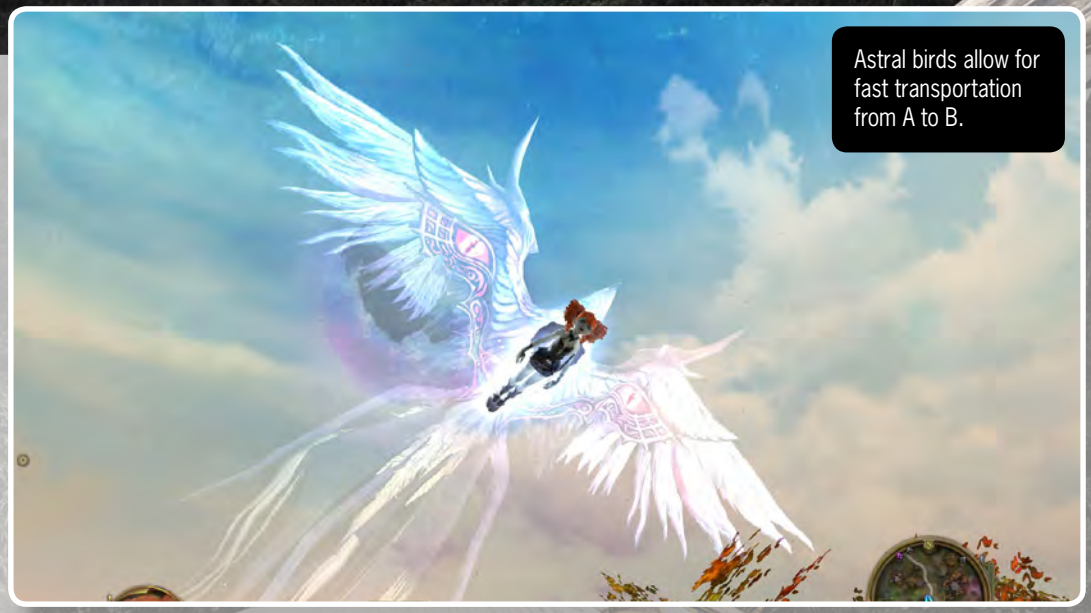
SHADOW OF THE ABYSS

Getting down and dirty with PvE and PvPvE

The endgame of Aion is divided between instances (PvE content) that see you and a bunch of friends pitting your wits against bosses and their minions – and the infamous Abyss and its PvPvE content. Now, given all the focus on the Elyos and the Asmodians, their feud and the lure of Ascension, you'd be forgiven if you forgot that Aion even has an endgame. However, it is at level 20 where things start to get interesting.

NCsoft has already announced plans to release the game in Europe and North America in September, and that it will also include the latest patch (1.5) which puts the localised version of Aion on a par with the Korean release when it comes to content – they had their release of 1.5 on August 5th. The Korean level cap currently stands at 50, meaning there will be plenty to do, even after getting your wings and becoming eligible to enter the Abyss. For example, players will be able to explore a dark version of Poeta aimed at higher level players, and there are numerous challenging instances as well as battlegrounds and truly epic raids, of which the giant ship, known as Dreadgion, is the latest.

Aion's maps are extremely detailed and a vital part of the game.



Astral birds allow for fast transportation from A to B.

FOR KINAH AND BLOOD

Help is at hand

Fortunately, you are not just thrown into the Abyss and left to fend for yourself. The game presents you with a number of cut-scenes which serve as tutorials, teaching you the way of this odd little dimension. However it's a lucrative place filled with the promise of the best gear, Kinah and prestige, and well worth taking the time to explore. On top of that, your faction has lots of NPCs scattered around offering Abyss-specific and campaign quests, as well as regular ones which can be picked up for experience and the usual quest rewards.

> PvE/PvPvE continued

Once you hit level 25, it's time to do some more campaign quests before you can explore the Abyss. You might have the wings but that doesn't mean much when it comes to fighting the Balaur, as you need to prove yourself as a powerful warrior before your superiors will allow you to do battle in this strange floating dimension – there's even a pop quiz, too. That said, the quests aren't that hard but act as a precursor to remind you of the seriousness of PvPvE content and the gravity of the situation within the Abyss. That said, you really don't have to do them, or any of the PvPvE content, but it's another option as well as a different kind of endgame.

At this point then you're probably wondering how you even get to the Abyss. Well you need to use an Abyssal Gate. Indeed, they're a little more familiar than you think, as most Elyos players will have come across one in the starting zone of Poeta which they later had to destroy. By the time you hit Altgard and Verteron, you'll probably have noticed the Abyssal Gates as they tend be restricted to citadels and fortresses in Aether-rich areas.

Everything you could possibly want can be found there, from vendors to transporters to different areas of the world. You can check your warehouse, stock up on potions and heal your soul; it's a macrocosm of the in-game world. If you were so inclined (and a PvE nut) you could probably spend all your time in the Abyss and never leave.

The warring heart of Atreia

The Abyss is basically what you think it might be, a large multi-layered zone filled with floating rocks, debris and, at its centre, a red giant-like sphere. Part of the appeal of the Abyss is the multiple levels and mobs which offer three-dimensional combat. Random mobs are only a level or so higher than the minimum of 25 but don't be deceived, this is not a place to wander without a purpose. There are plenty of elites, as well as other players and the Balaur themselves to contend with.

Dotted around the various levels within the Abyss are islands, each very different and crawling >

STARING INTO THE ABYSS

Teleport for free

All you need to do is fly to the Gate and right-click to enable the instant and free teleportation. The catch is that if you want to get back to Elysea of Asmodae then you have to pay, so bear that in mind and bind to the fortress where you entered the Abyss rather than within the Abyss itself. The word 'Abyss' probably conjured images of a dark, depressing place devoid of life. Well, to some extent it is like that, but the Elyosian and Asmodian camps are like slices of Sanctum and Pandaemonium transplanted directly into the void. It could even be classed as a display of what each side is fighting for, an ever-present reminder of the reason for PvPvE in the Abyss.

> PvE/PvPvE continued

with things to kill. You can fly almost anywhere in the Abyss but the timer on your wings remains. However, dotted about are large gates – which are reminiscent of the Abyssal Gate which got you there in the first place. Fly through these and they restore a little of your flight time and sometimes give a speed boost at the same time, enabling you to cross great distances without dying.

Near the centre of the Abyss is a teleporter where a faction-friendly NPC will teleport you to another level within the Abyss – for a fee, of course. The core of the planet also contains a series of keeps which can be held by either faction, if you can get enough people together to raid it and defeat its Balaur guardian. Although it was very quiet when we visited, the Abyss is certain to become a thriving hub of activity and the centre of the war between the player races, as well as the server-controlled Balaur.

Chomsky
You received 26 damage from Striped Kerub.
You inflicted 20 damage on Striped Kerub.
You received 21 damage from Striped Kerub.
You inflicted 15 damage on Striped Kerub.
You inflicted 1 damage on Striped Kerub.
You inflicted 1 damage on Striped Kerub.
You have gained 148 EXP from Striped Kerub

Learning how to fight is a fun and challenging part of the game.

ON THE WARPATH

The beginning of PvP gaming

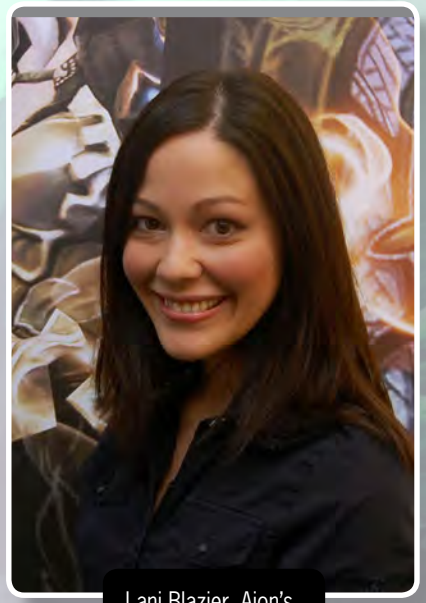
At level 20, in the next set of zones, players begin to come across strange, swirling worm-hole-like Rifts. These are the first stages of PvP content and allow players to portal into enemy territory and kill everyone in sight. That said, finding the Rifts can often be a challenge. A server notice will pop up, informing you that portals into one or both territories have appeared, and then it's a matter of finding them – either to nip through and slaughter, or to defend your own territory from interlopers. Fortunately, there is also a limit to the level and number of players who can use them.

GO WEST

Lost in translation? Hardly, as we uncover a game full of Eastern promise…

So how *do* you go about bringing a Korean game the size of Aion over to a Western audience? Thankfully, Aion's Associate Producer, Lani Blazier, had the answers for us.

How did you get involved with Aion in the first place?



Lani Blazier, Aion's Associate Producer

I've always been a huge fan of NCsoft's games – I loved Guild Wars and City of Heroes. When an opportunity came up to work on Aion then I jumped at the chance.

There has been much talk of 'Westernisation', so can you tell us how the game's changed from the original Korean version?
Since Aion was designed for a global audience from the very beginning, we've made very little change to the actual gameplay. It was very important to NCsoft West that we not only translate the content in Aion, but that we also make sure that the game content and story is culturally relevant to our players.

How challenging has it been to adapt a Korean game for Western audiences?
It's a challenge, but mostly because the amount of content in Aion is massive! Aion features thousands of quests, thousands of NPCs, thousands of lines of character dialogue in voiceovers, and so on. The Korean material we're working with is compelling to start with, too.

Can you explain the process involved in bringing Aion to Europe and North America?
Bringing Aion from Korea to NA and Europe is a much more challenging task than it seems. First, we had to localise the files, and with over 1,500 quests alone, it was a daunting task, not to mention the NPC dialogue, item text and other smaller localisation files – this took a huge team of writers a lot of sleepless nights to accomplish.

On top of that, we had to sync English, French and German and ensure that the translations were consistent and of a high quality across all three languages.

> "Bringing Aion from Korea to North America and Europe is a more challenging task than it seems"

Aion features beautiful graphics and landscapes.

Along with the localisation, we also had to set up entirely new hardware to handle Aion's server requirements across two continents, as well as additional internal systems to make sure Aion was fully integrated into the NCwest infrastructure. We also wanted to ensure that Western feedback was incorporated into the game so some aspects were familiar to our players.

Once you get past the localisation and technical hurdles, you have to train staff on the inner workings of the game. Some of our staff went to Seoul to attend a training seminar on the full functionality of Aion, so we were informed of the most up-to-date changes to the game. There are

> Interview continued

a lot of moving parts involved in bringing a game from another country – and language.

Do you think the fact the Korean origins of the game mean it faces additional challenges when it comes to getting the attention of Western players?
Traditionally, I think players expect different territories to produce a certain type of MMO and so yes, once they get this into their head then it can be quite challenging to convince them otherwise. What I can tell them though is that we've specifically designed Aion to ensure that it is as story-driven and relevant as possible for Western gamers.

Our focus from the very beginning has been to create a fun and unique MMO that appeals to a global audience. We're launching with a ton of content and we're listening very closely to player feedback – players can expect even more content than was available during our closed Beta events, including many more quests at all levels.

Do you think the use of social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and wikis have make the game more accessible?

> "It's a beautiful game but it also offers a deep and engaging story"

You can improve upon a game's content in many ways, and almost every one of those ways involves having a dialogue with the game's community. Because having a dialogue with the community improves the game content. Anything that improves our channels of communication and makes information related to Aion more accessible benefits everyone.

Twitter has really helped us to relay information about many of the smaller things we face in our everyday working life that might not be suitable for more formal settings. These snippets of information are still interesting to those who follow the game passionately. Twitter also has a playfulness and spontaneity that enhances day-to-day dialogue with the community.

Facebook, on the other hand, has grown to become a *de facto* homepage for many of us on the Internet, as it's an online extension of our offline identity. Being able to communicate topline, fundamental information and issues via this channel is invaluable. It ultimately allows people to stay on top of what is going on with Aion without requiring them to make additional effort, and without intruding into their daily Internet routine.

Why do you think people are so interested in the game? Is it the lore, the graphics, the ability to fly or something else?
I think it's a combination of all those things. It's a beautiful game, but it also offers a deep and engaging story that I think players will really enjoy reading and being a part of.

I've spoken to many players who are very curious about Aion's new gameplay mechanics, such as aerial combat and PvPvE. They want to understand those mechanics so that they can figure out how to optimise their combat techniques and their Legion's strategies. Aion also offers an incredible level of character and gameplay customisation to players. At San Diego Comic-Con, we had a big videoscreen that showed off the game, and surprisingly, the thing that turned folks' heads the most and caused the most delight was when a player was busy working in the character creator system. People were amazed at how many options we gave them.

> Interview continued

If you could only give people one piece of advice about playing Aion then what would it be?
If you don't mind, I'll give a few...

Keep up your gathering skill and begin early on.

Start your Ascension quest at level 9.

Don't sell harvested items to merchants – use the brokers instead. Don't bother selling green armour/ weapons once you outgrow them; use the extraction tool on them instead, as this will allow you to enchant the next set of gear. On the same note, from my experience enchanting your weapons generally gives more benefit than applying it to your armour.

And lastly, besides consumables, a quick way to regenerate is Rest.

I could go on, but I think that's a good start for new players.

What is your favourite part of Aion in terms of gameplay?
Capturing artefacts and fortresses; I love the teamwork involved and the challenge of taking on both the AI-controlled faction (Balaur) and the opposing player faction. Mix that in with three-dimensional flying combat and you've got yourself some crazy exciting gameplay.

Do you play a specific class or faction? If so, why?
During the course of the Beta events, I played more or less every class. For launch, I'm planning on creating a Sorcerer on the Asmodian side and a Chanter on the Elyos side. I've always enjoyed heavy damage-dealing classes, which is why I gravitate toward the Sorcerer class. I'd go Spiritmaster, but that class requires some serious multitasking skills. Every time I've tried to play a Spiritmaster, I stress myself out. The Priest classes are the ones I know the least, which is why I decided to give the Chanter a go. It's important that I play on both sides so that I can relate to players from both factions

What can you tell us about patch 1.5?
Players can expect a fully Westernised game in 1.5 – more customisation options, new zones and instances, chat channels for French and German, new skills and play styles, and of course, continued balancing. Patch 1.5 will also incorporate three major updates implemented in Korea since the launch in November 2008. We will be releasing more information on 1.5 on our website (www.aiononline.com) closer to launch.

What do you think the future holds for Aion?
Right now, we're focusing the majority of our time and energy on the launch. Come 25th September, we'll begin gearing up for the next content update right away. In the future, players can expect a fairly steady stream of updates and expansions, as well as contests and events managed by our community team. The goal for us as the community team is to provide the community with an exciting, fun and interesting world to play in. We will be closely monitoring the forums so that we can compile player feedback and bring it back to the development team for consideration. ●

> "The goal for us is to provide the community with an exciting, fun and interesting world to play in"

WORLDLY WISE

> "The game is perfectly pitched to gently introduce new sections of zones, new mobs and new challenges"

The wondrous world of Atreia

The game truly begins post-ascension when, at level 10, you are able to begin exploring the shattered world of Atreia. First up on the magical mystery tour are the Elyosian and Asmodian capitals – Sanctum and Pandaemonium, respectively. These floating cities are the hubs of Daevic society, and both have their own architecture and unique environment. Sanctum, for example, is suitably heavenly, with blossoming trees, happy wildlife playing in the grass and birds swooping overhead. On the other hand, Pandaemonium has a slightly darker, almost Gothic and labyrinthine feel to it.

This is your base during your time wandering Atreia, a safe haven in an unsafe world. Each city has everything the up-and-coming Daeva could ever need, from weapon masters, class and craft trainers, and a multitude of vendors. But they are not just cities, as the capitals are pieces of living history with ancient Daevas wandering the streets. In Sanctum for example, there is a holographic image showing Atreia as it is now; two halves of a shattered world held in place by gravity as opposed to the Tower of Eternity.

Both Elysea and Asmodae are comprised of a series of islands and continents aimed at specific zones. As you level up you can explore new areas, and while there is plenty of freedom to travel where you want, the game is perfectly pitched to gently introduce new sections of zones, new mobs and new challenges. The trick is acknowledging this and going with it rather than charging into certain death. If you don't, the costs of Soul Healing will soon mount up.

So what comes after Poeta and Ishalgan? Well after visiting the capitals,

> Atreia continued

your avatar is given orders to report to one of two fortresses. Elyos are sent to the coastal citadel of Verteron, while Asmodians must make their way to the fortress of Altgard – which rests on an ice lake. Each settlement acts as a quest hub, offering enough quests to allow you to advance another level and then directing you further afield. However, if you're worried about dying on the road, there are various flightpaths pre-enabled, allowing you to quickly get from A to B as well as taking a peek at the higher level zones, where critters are in the 40s! This kind of transport also allows you to see the lay of the land without the risk of death, and the scenery is certainly something, from fiery volcanos and icy caverns to parched grassland and life-giving rivers.

Tunapre Lake wins most gorgeous area and must be visited by all Asmodians.

> "The main lure of these new zones is the ability to take wing, even if it is only for 60 seconds"

Of course, the main lure of these new zones will be the ability to take wing, even if it is only for 60 seconds at a time. Within the lore of the game, Aether – the essence of the creator Aion – is running low. This explains why you can only free-fly in specific areas where the concentration is high, like the Abyss and selected areas of the mainland. You'll know when the Aether runs out as your avatar will hit a bubble-like force field and be forced to land to continue on foot. Fortunately, gliding is not as restrictive and can sometimes allow you to fly right over a stretch of hostile mobs – if you do it correctly, naturally.

But as you explore, there is plenty to be found including small hamlets, traders and skills trainers. While the playable areas of The Tower of Eternity are nothing compared to say Guild Wars or World of Warcraft, what it lacks in size is made up for in detail – and then some. NPCs have plenty to talk about, and you can watch mortals doing their day-to-day thing like herding

HP
MP
DP
Kalika
The Search For Rae
Experience the witch's fortune telling.
Memento Mori
Steal Treasure of the Deceased from the Vengeful Ghosts, and bring them to Derot.
Treasure of the Deceased(0/4)
Teaching A Lesson
Steal Odella from the Gray Mane Sentinels in the Odella Plantation, and bring them to Mijou.
Odella(0/5)
(US)ScreenshotAion0045.jpg.
The current screenshot was saved in C:Program FilesNCsoftAion
(US)ScreenshotAion0046.jpg.
The current screenshot was saved in C:Program FilesNCsoftAion
(US)ScreenshotAion0047.jpg.
XP

Careful, sometimes mobs will summon their friends when attacked.
White Foot Daru
Kalika
The Search For Rae
Gather a Spore Pouch from a Sticky Mushroom and bring it to Verdandi.
Spore Pouch(1/1)
Memento Mori
Steal Treasure of the Deceased from the Vengeful Ghosts, and bring them to Derot.
Treasure of the Deceased(0/4)
Teaching A Lesson
Steal Odella from the Gray Mane Sentinels in the Odella Plantation, and bring them to Mijou.
Odella(0/5)
You have acquired <Spore Pouch>.
You inflicted 143 damage on White Foot Daru by using Ice Chain I.
White Foot Daru's movement speed

> Atreia continued

chicken-like Qooqoos, as well as saving them from numerous hostile races who threaten their livelihood.

Levelling up

It's by this point that you start to become a force to be reckoned with. Daeva are viewed by many as demigods; an extension of the divine sent to help and protect them. As you level up, your gear improves through random drops and quest rewards, going from grey to green to blue and perhaps even orange – Normal, Rare, Legendary and Unique, respectively. Manastones and Godstones allow even more customisation of armour and weapons, making each Daeva even more unique and powerful. In-game it's also possible to change your physical appearance, as well as personalising your clothing and armour using dyes.

> "It's obvious that Aion is something very special indeed"

As with every MMO, specific classes can only wear certain types of armour and wield specific weapons. Because the game is high fantasy in terms of genre and lore, this also limits the kinds of weapons, so Aion features daggers, staves, books, greatswords, orbs, bows, maces, swords, shields held in the off-hand and polearms. Likewise, the armour is either cloth, leather, plate or chain, which can either be crafted, looted, given as a reward or purchased from a specific merchant.

This is also the time to start thinking about your future in-game by finding a Legion (a guild), or specialising in skills and professions in order to make an honest Kinah. After all, an MMO is not a single-player game, as you can buy and sell your wares in private stores, explore instances and down bosses. Indeed, while we've only seen a glimpse of everything NCsoft has in store for us in the closed Beta tests, it's obvious Aion is something very special indeed, and its European release cannot come soon enough.

TOP FIVE TIPS

Five guarantees to get you started in style

#1 Save, save, save

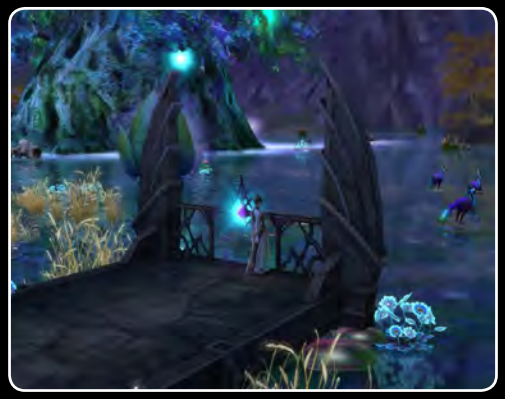
Cash might be plentiful but everything costs money, and we mean everything. You never know when you might need to teleport to the other side of your half of the world, so spend wisely and save carefully.

#2 Don't rush in where Elyos or Asmodians fear to tread

Rushing into a new zone is likely to end badly, usually with death and Soul Sickness. The game guides you for a reason so go with it and you'll live longer.

#3 Use the encyclopedia and quest tracker

If you get lost or confused, re-read the quest information, and if you still don't understand then click on the blue links. The in-game encyclopedia will be able to give you more hints and even locate a specific NPC or area where you can find certain mobs.



#4 Always carry bandages and potions

You don't want to die in the field and waste 10 minutes running back, do you? Well always make sure you have a decent supply of potions in your cube, as well as buff food and bandages for that post-battle respite.

#5 Storing your stuff and enhance everything

Sell anything you don't need, stash anything else in your Legion/personal Warehouse and expand your Cube whenever you can. Make sure all your gear is socketed with Mana or Godstones and change your title to add that extra punch in battle.